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No. 1191
17 August –
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The Washington Times

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FBI Agent Convicted of Selling Secrets to the SU

How Do You Protect A Country When The Enemy Lies Within?

American FBI agent, Robert Philip Hanssen has been found guilty of engaging in spy activities for the Soviet Union and Russia against the US for a period of at least 15 years. He will face life imprisonment at the Supermax Federal Penitentiary in Florence, Colorado.

Hanssen was transferred to the Washington DC counterintelligence unit in 1981 and moved to the suburb of Vienna, Virginia. Hanssen told investigators that he began spying in 1984, when he informed the Soviets that a member of the GRU (Russian military intelligence agency) was selling secrets to the US.

In 1985, he sold to the Soviets the names of three KGB agents in the United States secretly working for the FBI. They were soon recalled to Russia; two were executed and another was imprisoned.

Hanssen's wife, Bonnie revealed her shocking discovery of his secret life.

"I caught him writing a secret letter and my immediate thoughts were that it was to another woman. When confronting him about it, he confessed that he had sold some worthless facts to the Soviets for $20,000".

Hanssen was arrested on February 18, 2001, at Foxstone Park near his home in Vienna, Virginia, charged with selling American secrets to Moscow for more than $1.4 million in cash and diamonds over a 15-year period. On July 6, 2001, he pleaded guilty to 15 counts of espionage. His activities have been described as "the worst intelligence disaster in US history".

Game of Spy vs Spy

It was due to the heroic efforts of Eric O'Neill, a young FBI employeé who was assigned to watch Hanssen that he was finally apprehended. O'Neill was able to conduct his investigation using the position of Hanssen's clerk as a cover.

"My superiors led me to believe I was investigating Hanssen's sexual habits. However, after several weeks, I found him to be a loving father and devout Catholic. As my respect for him grew, I started to question the case. This is when they informed me of its significance".

Although he admitted the case put much strain on his personal life, his wife finding Hanssen's behavior "intrusive", with his newly gained motivation and Hanssen's trust intact, O'Neill was able to locate crucial evidence.

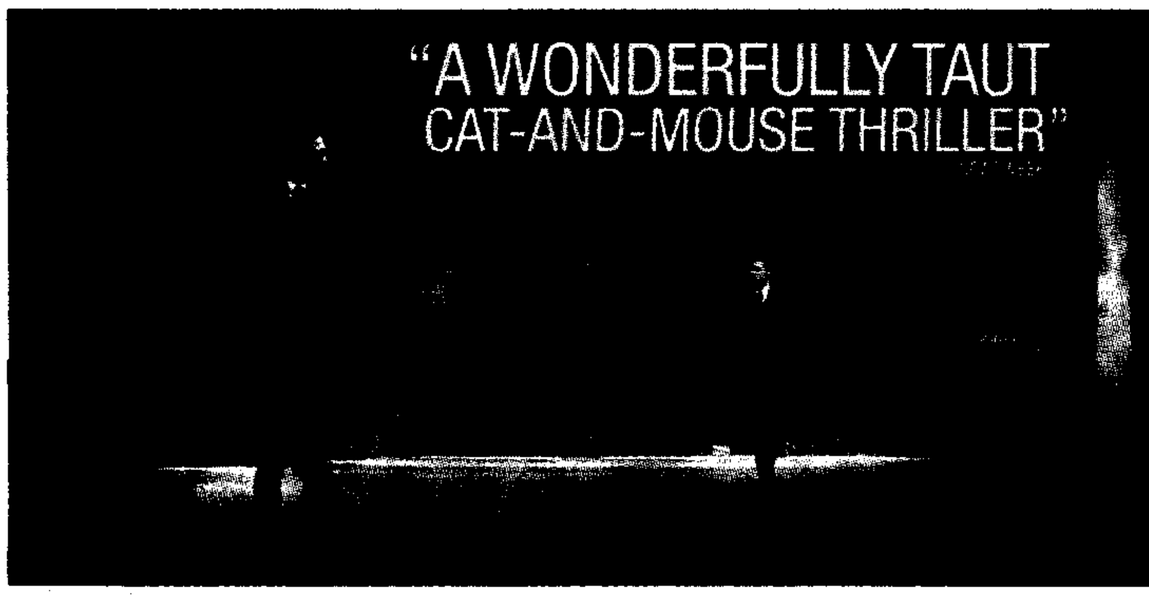
"I ascertained that Hanssen was using a Personal Digital Assistant to store his information. When I was able to obtain this PDA briefly and have agents download and decode its encrypted contents, the FBI had its smoking gun".

The Story of The Lies That Never Stopped

Louis J. Freeh
New York

"A betrayal of trust by an FBI Agent–who is not only sworn to enforce the law, but specifically to help protect our nation's security–is particularly abhorrent.This kind of criminal conduct represents the most traitorous action imaginable against a country governed by the rule of law. It also strikes at the heart of everything the FBI represents: the commitment of over 28,000 honest and dedicated men and women who work diligently to earn the trust and confidence of the American people every day."

Former FBI Director Louis J. Freeh on the arrest of Robert Hanssen



To the readers of the WALL STREET JOURNAL – a solemn promise

I AM HAPPY to announce that Gnome International has successfully completed the purchase of the prestigious Wall Street Journal.

The WSJ, as it has been known, is one of the most respected titles anywhere on the globe, with an unparalleled record for editorial independence and journalistic integrity.

I, Lord Gnome, do hereby give my word to the readers and staff of the WSJ that in no way will I attempt to compromise either of those quintessential principles and, in order that they should be honoured at all times, I have today appointed the following persons as a board of independent directors, charged with safeguarding the integrity of the WSJ.

- Mrs Wen Dee Gnome, Vice-Chairman Gnome International (Peking) Inc.
- Dim Son Gnome, Vice-Chairman of Gnome International (Guangzhou) Inc.
- Hiram J Lickspittle, Vice-Chairman of Gnome Leisure and Adult TV Holdings (Miami) Inc.

What you will see in your new Super Soaraway Gnome Street Journal!

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■ Great new films from 20th Century Fox **2**

■ The Dow Jones Lovelies – Figures You Really Want To See **3**

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EDITORIAL
6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.
Tel: 020 7437 4017. Fax: 020 7437 0705.
Email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk
Website: www.private-eye.co.uk

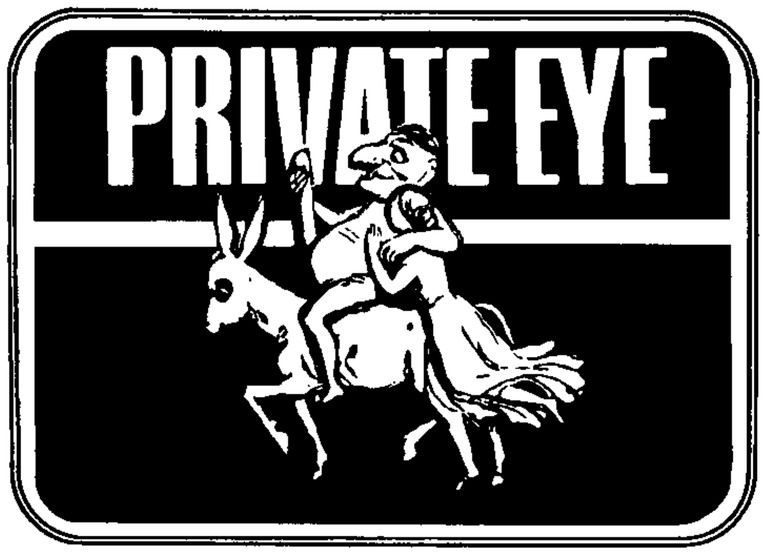
PRIVATE EYE SUBSCRIPTIONS/SALES
PO Box 326, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8FA.
Subscription enquiries: 01795 414 871
Overseas: +44 (0) 1795 414 870 Fax: 01795 414 555.
Web: www.subsonline.co.uk
Email: private-eye@servicehelpline.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
£28 per annum. Europe and Eire £34. Airmail (rest of world) £38.
Cheques/POs to Private Eye. Mastercard/Visa.

ADVERTISING
Ten Alps Publishing, 9 Savoy Street, London WC2E 7HR.
Email: private-eye@tenalpspublishing.com
Display: 020 7878 2366 **Classified:** 020 7240 9129

Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. **Printed** by BGP Ltd, Bicester OX6 7QZ .
Distributed by P.E. Distributions, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. 020 7437 4017.

ABC



Cleared for take-offs

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THE appointment of David Varney as Gordon Brown's "adviser on public service transformation" has two big implications: firstly, Gordon is more likely to stick with ID cards; secondly, they are more likely to be a disaster.

The former boss of Shell, British Gas and O_2 served on various Brownite boards of inquiry until the then chancellor made him chairman of HM Revenue & Customs in 2004. Varney wrote a report last December on "service transformation" for Brown, which suggested that new technology could transform the civil service by "joining up the public service islands" with shared "identity management systems", to slash bureaucracy.

Unfortunately Varney's record on improving service delivery through technology is not good. He was running O_2 when the firm got the Airwave PFI contract to supply the police with digital radios. Complaints have followed, most recently two London Assembly inquiries which pointed to Airwave's deficiencies in the wake of the London Underground bombings – not least its weakness around tall buildings. At the time, O_2 exploited the fact that there was no competition for the deal, and according to the National Audit Office (NAO) squeezed at least an extra £300m out of the police. Fine work!

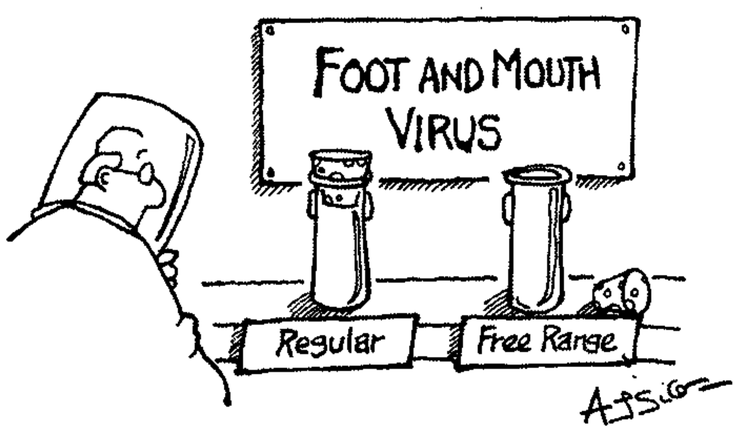
WITH billions of pounds of identity card contracts put up for grabs last week, the Home Office's Identity and Passport Service (IPS) ought to have dispelled any doubts about how the deals will be handed out. Yet it refuses to answer simple questions about the interests of the people running the process.

Could this be related to the fact that both chief executive James Hall and commercial director Bill Crothers have joined the IPS in the last year from a firm with much to gain from ID cards, Accenture?

In fact the IPS is being alarmingly cavalier with the information laws it should be obeying. The *Eye* first asked for details on managers' interests under the Freedom of Information Act in February. The IPS lost the request. The question was resubmitted in April, but the IPS has stonewalled, claiming to have been considering the "public interest" for months (well after the legal deadline).

A spokeswoman admits that Hall and Crothers have lodged "appropriate declarations of interest". So can the *Eye* see them? No – "you'll have to wait for the FoI response".

All that is known from public filings in the US is that Hall, a former Accenture MD, and Crothers were shareholders and there is no evidence of their having disposed of their interests. The IPS insists: "It is relatively common for conflicts of interest to occur; the conflict itself is less the issue than how it is dealt with." So why not admit whether they exist?



CHEERING news from Wales, where the principality's largest hospital trust has cut the rate of MRSA infection by 74 percent over the past six years.

Overall, Wales has a lower rate of MRSA cases than England, but Cardiff and the Vale NHS Trust has won international attention for the impressive results, which it puts down to "good practice on the wards".

So how do they do it?

Well, only one of Wales's hospitals still uses private contract cleaners and the Assembly government is planning to put a stop to that very soon, keeping all hospital cleaners in-house.

Cleaning was brought in-house at Swansea's Morriston hospital last year after complaints about standards under contractors ISS Mediclean from both patients and staff. The Swansea NHS Trust saw a 12 percent drop in MRSA cases in the past year and was named as one of the country's top improvers.

Easy when you know how, eh?

THE THINGS THEY SAY...

"This lack of control will become a very real problem within the next two to three years if in fact PFI takes off. Apparent savings now could be countered by the formidable commitment on revenue expenditure in years to come."

– Opposition spokesman Alistair Darling attacks Tory PFI costs of £0.5bn a year in 1997... before becoming chancellor and spending £8bn a year on PFI in 2007.

** The £838m of buried Treasury, p26*

Number crunchings

2,500 ■ Post Offices scheduled for closure for being unprofitable

£250,000 ■ Salary of Alan Cook, managing director of Post Office in charge of closure programme (not including bonuses)

NEWS

HATS off to the business bigwigs who last year gave a Queen's Award for Enterprise to Kensington Mortgages, a specialist mortgage lender which offers sub-prime loans, citing the company's "outstanding achievement in innovation".

In the US, the sub-prime industry is one whose main innovative idea is to lend at high rates of interest to people who can barely afford it, have a poor track record with money or otherwise find it hard to get a conventional mortgage. The whole nasty business has been unravelling there with dismal consequences for financial markets around the world.

How much longer before Kensington et al feel the chill over here? The signs are that both the company and its customers have found the going tough. Research for Shelter's *Roof* magazine showed that Kensington was one of the main sub-prime lenders behind a surge in possession proceedings in Kingston-Upon-Thames. And with numerous profit warnings and the recent departure of chief executive John Maltby, before the company was acquired on the cheap by Investec, its halo appears to be slipping.

IT WAS probably inevitable that plans for a huge cross-governmental IT procurement consultancy, to cut down on IT procurement cock-ups and save money, would be a cock-up.

The Treasury agency OGCbuying.solutions (OGCbs) announced that it was halting the delightfully named "Integrated Solutions" project because it was better to stop now than to carry on with "a complex framework that is unfit for purpose". The system was supposed to help central and local government, police forces, NHS trusts and registered charities to buy services such as ICT systems through a "pre-tendered" catalogue.

The bidders are not going to be happy – especially as this is the second time in two years that OGCbs has scrapped similar plans after lots of money had been spent preparing bids. Last time it was the "Total Solutions" framework that bit the dust, in April last year. Isn't it time someone thought up a final solution?

EYE TOLD YOU SO

"A MULTI-MILLION pound government project to give greater protection... by managing offenders... is threatened with collapse because of financial problems," the *Times* revealed on 9 August – more than a year after the *Eye*.

In issue 1166 we reported how the National Offender Management Service's IT vision, C-NOMIS, was coming unstuck barely months after it had been started. It was supposed to have been implemented in HMP Albany on the Isle of Wight in July 2006, but wasn't ready.

Since then officials from the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, which has taken over offender management with prisons and probation, have been trying to make an increasingly-late IT project appear to be on track. Delays were reported again later in 2006 and this year too; cost increases then became inevitable and now the wheels have come off completely.

Though the *Times* speculated about the multi-million pound cost of cancelling the project, the MoJ *can't* cancel it. In February Baroness Scotland told parliament that £70m (less VAT) had been spent already, and that the "estimated full-life cost (over 14 years) is £234m". The National Association of Probation Officers says it has been told that NOMS' IT people think £1bn will be closer to the mark.

Because the MoJ has no extra money to fund a late and ballooning C-NOMIS, and because no one thought to include VAT in the estimates, prisons minister David Hanson has stopped further work pending a review.

He has been told the only way the current creaking systems in prisons can be replaced without breaking the bank is to halt work on probation. But without a connection to probation, C-NOMIS will be moderately useless.

For example, when the *Eye* first reported problems, it was after Mike Manisty, director of the NOMS information services section, told a London conference how Zahid Mubarek, killed in 2000 by a convicted criminal in his Feltham prison cell while on remand, died partly through prisons being unable to manage risk to offenders. C-NOMIS, he said, would play a vital role in stopping this fatal outcome occurring again.

Without connections to probation and beyond, millions more will be spent to create a system that is no safer than before.

Street Of Shame

PRIVATE EQUITY companies "are a risk to the economy as a whole", the *Observer* announced in March this year, citing the case of a German publisher which was sold to venture-capital specialists Apax Partners in 2001. "Then it had 4,000 employees. It now... has less than 900."

Shortly afterwards the *Observer*'s parent company, Guardian Media Group, flogged 49 percent of its stake in *AutoTrader* to the selfsame Apax Partners for £675m. And, sure enough, 200 staff at *AutoTrader* have now learned that their jobs will be axed by September. The redundancy terms are much less generous than those which were available when the paper was wholly owned by the caring, sharing *Grauniad*.

Although *AutoTrader* made profits of £105m last year (which subsidised the £16m losses racked up by the *Guardian* and *Observer*), next year the interest payable to the banks and various offshore GMG and Apax trusts should ensure that no net profits are made in the UK – and hence no corporation tax will be due.

Perhaps this was what Polly Toynbee had in mind when she wrote a furious salvo last month attacking "the private-equity tax evaders, the trust fund inheritance tax cheats and their whole wicked tribe of tax advisers bent on denying the state as much money as possible". But *Guardian* executives clearly don't agree: last week GMG confirmed that it hopes to launch a joint bid for media group Emap in concert with... Apax Partners.

Scone Palace

An important gathering place since Pictish times, but it is better known for being the crowing-place of Scottish kings in the Middle Ages

The Times

WHEN Lord Hartwell was proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph* in the 1970s, he would merely emit a gentle aristocratic sigh when the print unions held his newspaper to ransom.

Lord Black, his successor, was a rough diamond by comparison, but even when under pressure he never resorted to four-letter expletives in the boardroom.

No such inhibition for Aidan Barclay, the diminutive representative on earth of the current proprietors, as the paper's editorial director Richard Ellis discovered the other day. Listening to Ellis explain why various departments in the group had missed their budgets, eventually Barclay could bear it no more.

"You," he shrieked, "are spending all my fucking money!"

THE BARCLAY twins may own the odd newspaper or two, but such is their attitude to free speech that most other papers seem to find it safest not to write about them at all these days.

So, when they sold the *Daily Torygraph*'s shiny new HQ next to Victoria Station last month for a handy £75m more than they paid for it less than two years ago, the deal was not reported outside the property trade mags.

The building went on sale in April, 16 months after the Barclays bought it from a German fund, CGI, for £156m. The buyer, for around £225m, was Pacific Group, run by Monaco and Switzerland-based Achilleas Kallakis. Not very controversial, really – but why risk upsetting two men who want to be an island?

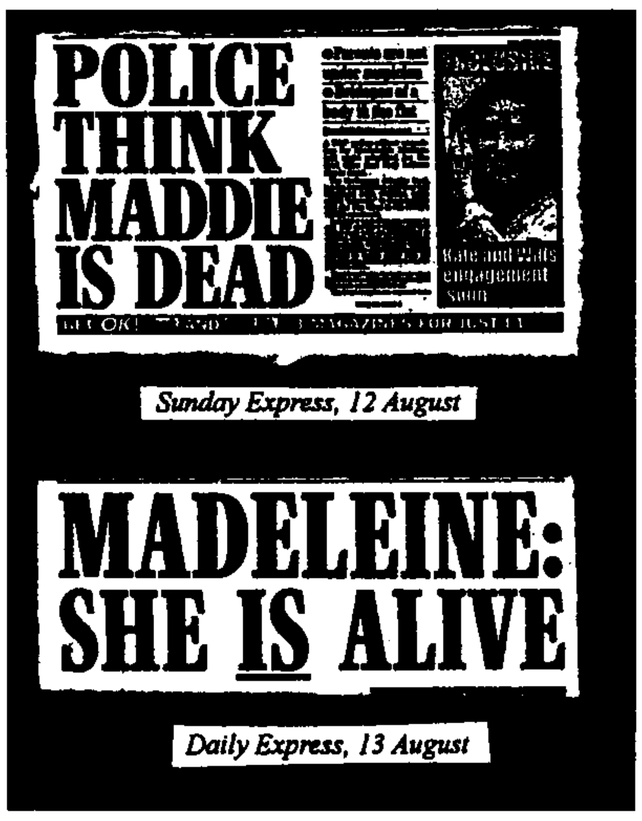
"*DAILY Express* success" shrieked that newspaper with some surprise on 11 August, trumpeting "a brilliant sales increase of 23,849 copies a day in July compared with June, which was in turn up 4,436 a day compared with May."

The paper attributed the rise to the fact that "we offer brilliant coverage across all aspects of national life including news, features, sport, health, money and politics." But this is not the full story.

As last week's ABC figures revealed, the paper is nearly 5 percent down on last year's sales figures – and it sells 191,000 fewer copies each day than it did in November 2000 when Richard Desmond took over as proprietor.

JUST FANCY THAT

(or How *Express* Journalism Works)


POLICE THINK MADDIE IS DEAD
Kate and Wills engagement soon
Sunday Express, 12 August
MADELEINE: SHE IS ALIVE
Daily Express, 13 August

"IS ROBERT Murat about to be cleared?" asked the *Daily Express* on 11 August, musing on the ultimate fate of the suspect in the disappearance of Madeleine McCann.

"There are growing signs in Portugal that detectives leading the inquiry are preparing to drop their case against the British expat... Friends and family say he has come close to suicide. So how did Robert Murat come to fall under suspicion?"

Well, it might have had something to do with headlines like "Sex secret of Madeleine suspect"; "Maddy suspect behaved just like Huntley"; "Revealed: the cellar in suspect's villa"; "Suspect's ex-wife tells of porn quiz"; "How Madeleine suspect Murat 'changed alibi'"; "Sniffer dogs back at suspect's home" and last week's "Major new breakthrough: suspect's home taped off as his alibi is blown wide open".

And where did all these appear? In the *Daily Express*!

OUTRAGED at being hoodwinked by the publicity for ITV's *Malcolm and Barbara* documentary which erroneously suggested it featured the last moments of a man dying from Alzheimers, the *Sun* delivered a damning verdict in its editorial column.

"The film-maker Paul Watson had the gall last week to attack 'greedy' producers of OTHER shows found to be fakes. But the hype around HIS programme is a big lie too… Heads have already rolled over this crisis of trust in British television. More may have to go now to rid the networks of an arrogance that results in the humble viewer being treated with contempt."

So how did the *Sun* react to its own crisis of trust, when Kevin Keeble, whose photograph of a great white shark had been splashed all over the paper on 1 August beneath the headline "Just when you thought it was safe…", admitted that he had actually taken the snap in South Africa, not off the coast of Cornwall as the paper claimed??

In contrast to previous days, which had featured headlines like "tourists flock to see great white", "I saw monster", "Sun Fins out there" and "Jaws just 40ft from a beach", the paper breathed not a word on the matter.

"BULLYING Jade Goody will be rushed to a safe house by cops when she gets the Big Brother boot tonight – after branding her enemy 'Shilpa Poppadum'," the *Sun* raged on January 19 this year. "The dimwit sparked worldwide outrage with her sick taunts."

So outraged was the paper by the controversy over Channel 4's *Celebrity Big Brother* that it launched a front-page campaign against "the most offensive and ugly words in the English language" and urged its readers to "Evict the Face of Hate."

Last week, singer Hilary Duff dressed up in an Indian-style outfit complete with henna tattoos and bindi for her latest video. How did the website of the *Sun*'s Bizarre column, edited by Victoria Newton, greet the news? With a shot of her in the outfit with the caption "Hilary Poppaduff" – which remained online for at least two hours, until someone thought it might be an idea to remove it.

FOLLOWING an excoriating bollocking from editor Rebekah Wade over a missed interview with Pete Doherty – suggesting she and her colleagues had "all lost any journalistic ability you ever had" – the pressure was on *Sun* showbusiness editor Victoria Newton to pull in a big story.

And how she managed it! "AMY IN DRUGS COLLAPSE", shrieked her paper's front page on 9 August over news that singer and booze and drug fan Amy Winehouse had been rushed into hospital, a tale which appeared beneath a vast banner reading "SUN EXCLUSIVE".

And indeed it was – unless you counted the *Mirror, Independent, Times, Mail* and *Daily Record*, all of whom also managed to follow up the press release her record company had put out announcing her admission to hospital the previous afternoon...

ANOTHER great victory for the age of the freebie *with freesheet thelondonpaper*'s review of celebrity junkie Pete Doherty's top-secret solo gig last month at the Bitter End pub in Romford.

"During the short acoustic set, Pete belted out a couple of Babyshambles classics, but also showcased new material," the paper's gossip column reported. "'Pete was looking the best he's been for ages,' a source tells *the Buzz*. 'He seemed really on top of it. He was joking about a drug addiction patch on his stomach'."

This was something of a world exclusive, given that as far as everyone else was concerned, Doherty's gig at the pub had been cancelled the previous afternoon due to his latest stint in rehab.

Thelondonpaper famously managed to get him muddled with rapper P Diddy in its first ever edition last September (see *Eye* 1167) – so perhaps it was him its "source" watched serenading the youth of Essex instead.

HACKWATCH

The Trouble With Hari

A LITTLE-KNOWN fact about the 28-year-old *Indie* pundit Johann Hari is that he used to work for Jeffrey Archer. In Lord Archole's prison diary for 7 August 2000 – while he was banged up in Belmarsh – he mentions receiving a letter from "my young researcher Johann Hari", who was assisting the great fabulist with his novel *Sons of Fortune*. The boy-wonder clearly learned from the master: not only has Hari now been caught displaying a "gift for inaccurate précis" (as Mary Archer once described Jeffrey's talent) but he is threatening to sue a hack who dared allude to it.

The trouble began last month when Hari reviewed Nick Cohen's book *What's Left?* for the American magazine *Dissent*. It was a scathing critique – but it also attributed to Cohen several opinions which were the exact opposite of those he argued in the book. (When challenged about the misrepresentations – his claim, for example, that Cohen's parents raised him "to see Orwell in Catalonia as his moral archetype" – Hari explained that although Cohen didn't say this in *What's Left?* he had once said something similar during a drunken dinner at the Groucho Club.) Cohen promptly wrote an angry riposte which *Comment* posted on its website a fortnight ago.

Then the fun started. On the Harry's Place blog, to which Hari himself used to contribute occasionally, a blogger who uses the pseudonym David T quoted some of Cohen's reply. He then added a comment of his own: that for anyone who aspires to be a serious commentator or non-tabloid journalist, "a reputation for making things up should be career death".

Hari went ballistic, demanding that unless these "libellous comments" were taken down immediately he'd take legal action. The *Indie* lawyers, he revealed, had assured him that he could sue and win. David T replied that if he was forced to remove the post he'd replace it with an explanation of why he had to do so. And so it came to pass.

The next day, Hari put a message on his own website claiming that (a) David T had been contacted by the *Indie* lawyers, and (b) had admitted that what he wrote was without foundation. Both these statements were untrue. Over at Harry's Place, David T observed wryly that he couldn't say what was wrong with Hari's statements without repeating the alleged "libel" – ie that Hari was making things up. This gave Hari another fit of the abdabs. Warning the blogger that the *Indie* had agreed to back him in a libel action and he'd get huge damages, he demanded that Harry's Place issue an apology. David T said that although he might apologise for upsetting the poor sensitive hack he wasn't prepared to accept that he'd defamed him. Besides, he would only put up a statement of any kind if Hari in turn apologised for threatening to sue him. Hari refused to participate in what he called "moral equivalence".

Needless to say, the spat has provoked some comment in cyberspace – most of it very rude indeed about the Hari (and none too complimentary about the *Indie*'s apparent willingness to support his litigious threats). A comment by one blogger, Francis Sedgemore, has the headline: "Johann Hari is a big daft cock!" Sedgemore also noted that the *Eye* had made similar allegations against the "petulant brat" as long ago as March 2003 without a sniff of a writ – though Hari did write a letter to the *Observer* later that year denouncing our "silly lies" about him. "Even the slightest factual analysis of *Private Eye*'s retaliatory accusations causes them to immediately crumble into dust," he claimed.

Alas! By the time the *Observer* letter appeared, yet another of his own columnar pillars had crumbled. On 26 March 2003 Hari had regaled *Indie* readers with the tale of Kenneth Joseph, a young American pastor who travelled to Iraq as a human shield but was then "shocked back to reality" by the discovery that the Iraqi people all supported a US invasion. But, as many readers wrote to inform Hari, the whole story was a propaganda fabrication by right-wingers associated with the Moonies and had already been exposed as such elsewhere. Eventually, after further pressure, he added a PS to his column on 25 September 2003: "It transpires that Kenneth Joseph was probably a bullshitter, and that his claims were false. I should have checked his story out more rigorously before I used it…"

In those days Hari was as vehemently pro-war as he is now anti. "Last October, I spend a month as a journalist seeing the reality of life under Saddam Hussein," he wrote in the *Indie* on 10 January 2003. "Most of the Iraqi people I encountered… would hug me and offer coded support [for an invasion]."

Alas again! He had actually spent a fortnight in Iraq as a holidaymaker, on a package tour visiting archaeological sites – and in a *Grauniad* piece about the trip on 3 December 2002, had complained that "it was very difficult to get Iraqi people to express their feelings… I blundered about asking fairly direct political questions, which caused people to recoil in horror… Many people asked quite genuinely 'why your government hates the Arab world'." Yet in an *Indie* column only a few weeks later he claimed that people in Iraq kept asking him: "When will you come to free us? When will we be able to live again?" Since these pleas from Iraqis yearning for Western intervention must have struck him as newsworthy, why hadn't he mentioned them in his original *Guardian* feature?

It is a question that might even tax the imagination of Jeffrey Archer.

WITH a year to go before Beijing and five years before the London Olympics, latest redundancies at the *Times* have raised eyebrows in the paper's sports department.

The paper has jettisoned its two most experienced writers on the Olympics and the principal sport at the Games, athletics, in John Goodbody and David Powell.

Powell's replacement as athletics hack is one Rick Broadbent, a motor bike writer who was so unimpressed by his new beat he begged sports editor Tim Hallissey to let him get back on his bike. And where was Broadbent for his first athletics national championships in Manchester? Away on holiday!

STANDARDS of research at the *Independent* remain reassuringly high.

Junior reporter Jerome Taylor recently sent out a global email to all the paper's staff, asking: "Anyone have a number for Joe Strummer?"

Thankfully, colleagues were quick to point him to the front-page obituary – "He'll Rock the Casbah no more" – and leader column the paper ran on the occasion of the Clash frontman's death in 2002.

West Country churchyard

WHY is Gordon Brown reading *Who Paid the Piper?*, a book by Frances Stonor Saunders that details CIA secret funding and manipulation of intellectuals and writers in the Cold War?

In a piece for the *Sun* last year, Brown suggested that some Cold War methods could be used in the War on Terror. And those who've spoken to the Prime Minister say he is scouring Stonor Saunders' book for ideas.

This is surprising – not least to the book's author, as her history is an exposé of the CIA's covert propaganda campaign, not a celebration. The cover laments "one of the great stories of intellectual and artistic corruption by power", its author asking: "What kind of freedom can be advanced by such deception?" Among other things, she details the way CIA-backed writers were prevented from speaking honestly about the McCarthy witch hunts and the Vietnam war.

Stonor Saunders told the *Eye* she was "dumbfounded" at Gordon's apparent use of her book. She added: "If it is a sign he believes that some kind of dialogue is better than strafing and bombing, then good – but to look to my book for that is a complete contradiction. It tries to deliver a polemic about how ideas can be mismanaged and abused."

GORDON BROWN's former bag-carrier Neal Lawson, who chairs the Labour ginger-group Compass, is in a state of ecstasy.

"Brown could be the first Labour leader since Clement Attlee to recast British society," he raved in the *Guardian* last week. "A totally new and exciting narrative opens up in which reassurance comes from the left, not the right." And the narrative has an equally thrilling sub-plot: "As Cameron's bubble finally bursts, the *Mail* and Murdoch are left without a negotiating card in their battle to influence Brown. At last we can stop pandering to their reactionary agenda..."

Can this be the same Neal Lawson whose political lobbying company LLM incurred the wrath of trade unions a few years ago by advising Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation (for a hefty fee) on how to undermine the Labour government's Fairness at Work Bill? Yes indeed!

SHOULD the head of a government-funded quango promoting the Welsh language really be advising Labour on how to win back Welsh-speaking voters who have been deserting to Plaid Cymru?

The Welsh Labour party, currently forming a minority government in the Welsh Assembly, has set up a working group to look at recovering support in Welsh-speaking areas that used to be Labour heartlands. The group is part of Labour's Welsh language discussion forum Cymdeithas Cledwyn and includes assembly members and trade unionists.

It also includes Meri Huws, chair of the Welsh Language Board – a statutory body funded by the assembly. The selection of Labour party member Huws as WLB chair caused controversy in 2004: Plaid Cymru made a formal complaint charging that Huws had been chosen even though another candidate scored higher at interview.

The Commissioner for Public Appointments, Dame Rennie Fritchie, cleared then culture minister Alan Pugh of misconduct, but did find "identifiable shortcomings" in the appointment process. Will the valleys now echo again with cries of discontent?

CALLED TO ORDURE

JUST because the *Daily Mail* runs a fierce hatchet job on Commons Speaker Michael Martin, it doesn't mean the world should feel too much sympathy for "Gorbals Mick".

The *Hate Mail* devoted a double-page spread last week to the supposedly impartial guardian of parliamentary order, the attack led by hyperactive hack Quentin Letts. Yet Martin certainly *does* have form as a poor Speaker and MPs on all sides should be concerned that he wants to stay several more years in the job.

Ever since his election to the post in 2000, an event which itself was marred by a minor betting scandal (needless to say, the culprit has since been promoted to ministerial office), Martin has been a divisive, tribal figure and a friend of the establishment. Consider the evidence:

24 May: Senior Tory David Heathcoat Amory (Wells), having been overlooked by the Speaker during a debate, wanders up to have a quiet word with the Speaker's secretary (a tailcoated figure who stands by the chair). This is routine behaviour but Martin explodes. "Leave the secretary alone!" he screams. "Do not complain if you do not get called, because you do well." He jabs a finger at Heathcoat Amory and turns red in the face. Heathcoat Amory, who has been hit by spit from the Speaker's mouth, leaves the Chamber in silent astonishment.

11 June: Tony Blair is making a Commons statement on the G8 summit. Labour backbencher Gordon Prentice (Pendle), a noted parliamentarian, rises to his feet to indicate that he would like to ask a question. Martin loses his rag. "Order! I expect hon. Members to stand at the beginning so that I can make a calculation as to who I am going to call. He should not come in at the last moment."

Prentice shakes his head in bafflement. "I have been here throughout," he says. But the Speaker is in no mood for cheek. "You therefore had an opportunity to stand at the beginning," he snaps. Martin's new ruling, if taken seriously, would mean an MP could never rise to seek clarification on something a minister had just said at the despatch box. Isn't that the point of parliamentary debate?

28 June: Business questions, and the first backbencher called is not a Privy Counsellor, a former minister or even one of the House's most regular attenders, but Martyn Jones, a low-profile Welsh Labour MP. Jones has just won a libel action against the *Mail on Sunday*, the *Mail*'s sister paper which in the past has also attacked Martin. Jones's lawyers were Carter Ruck and partners, and Jones uses the moment to make a sneery attack on the *MoS*'s political editor. A few days later, Martin himself hires Carter Ruck to act as his press spokesmen at a cost to the public of nearly £3000.

4 July: Rhondda's Chris Bryant (Lab) tries to enter Welsh questions to make a point about a military training base near his constituency which is receiving £58m of public funds and represents 7,000 local jobs. An important matter for his constituents, surely. But the Speaker either mishears Bryant's question or has taken against the ex-public schoolboy and sometime Anglican curate.

"Order!" he bawls. "What has that got to do with the matter before us? Nothing! It has nothing to do with it!" Bryant can hardly believe this brusque treatment. "It has!" he complains. Such dissent to the chair was once rare but these days it is all the fashion.

On the same day, Martin – who is often quick to stop an MP from waffling – allows a fabulously verbose contribution at prime minister's questions from his fellow Scot, ex-Home Secretary John Reid. Is it one rule for Sassenachs and poncey intellectuals, another for working-class Scots?

5 July: The new leader of the Commons, Harriet Harman, has numerous jobs in government. Her Tory opponent Theresa May, echoing a jibe which the late Eric Forth used frequently against Peter Hain, addresses Harman as the "part-time Leader of the House". Martin never stopped Scotsman Forth but he has no intention of allowing May to besmirch the name of Comrade Harriet.

"There are courtesies that we are entitled to in the House," he says. "The right hon. and learned Lady is the Leader of the House." If May ever uses the term "part-time Leader of the House" again, says Martin, "I will stop her".

26 July: Theresa May again finds herself interrupted by the Speaker. This time she is trying to criticise the government about the way it "abandoned parliamentary procedure" in forcing Keith Vaz on to the home affairs select committee. "The House has decided on that matter," declares Martin loftily. "That matter should not be raised again."

Is it really the Speaker's job to silence criticism of such a controversial appointment? May can hardly conceal her anger. "I am grateful for your advice, Mr Speaker," she says. Her sarcasm was so heavy she might as well have said "get lost you old fool" – a remark which might have had scores of MPs on all sides cheering in agreement.

Unfortunately, the attacks on the Speaker by Letts & Co may serve to bolster Martin's shaky position. He may be a hopeless Speaker, but lefty MPs are said to be rallying to support him against their own *bête noire*, the hated *Daily Mail*.

'Gavel Basher'

EVERY flooded household, insured or not, qualifies for an immediate £1,000 ex-gratia cheque, regardless of how much damage has been caused.

This may sound like good news – but no one in Gloucester (or indeed anywhere in England or Wales) need apply. This generous gesture is only for those affected by the rather lower flooding levels that hit Northern Ireland in June.

Encouraging even the most minor "victims" to take the money (which was handed over at a leisure centre on production of a photo id and utility bill), Belfast's lord mayor Jim Rodgers said: "There's no differential. If you had water into your home, you qualify for this payment."

At least 350 householders are thought to have claimed in the Belfast East constituency alone – which was good news for local MP Peter Robinson, who is also the Stormont minister for finance who signed off on the £5m of grant aid.

'Backbiter'

PYLON PRESSURE

SCOTTISH and Southern Energy Plc (SSE) is preparing to drive a 137-mile long line of pylons through Scotland's recently established Cairngorms National Park. If given the go-ahead, the Beauly to Denny power line would take wind farm energy from the Highlands to the south.

First, however, SSE must win the public inquiry which reopens on 28 August, where the power company is battling against local councils and the Cairngorms Revolt Against Pylons. SSE says putting cable underground is far too expensive. The planned 600 huge pylons would be 65m tall.

SSE (profit: £1.1bn) bleats that it would have to ask energy regulator Ofgem for an electricity price increase to cover the cost of undergrounding (sic) the cable. However, chairman Sir Robert Smith and chief executive Ian Marchant have not been so shy about asking Ofgem for a price increase to cover their £4m public inquiry costs, described in the application as "an income adjusting event".

WHISTLEBLOWING IN THE WIND

A 47-YEAR-OLD diplomat is spending the summer at home wondering whether police will tell him he faces prosecution at the Old Bailey when he answers for bail next month.

As Special Branch arrested him on suspicion of passing on a good dozen or so official documents that appeared in the *Observer* and *New Statesman*, and then were bound together by the Conservative think-tank Policy Exchange and issued as a kind of leaker's collected works, charges appear a formality.

If the authorities were to step back, however, they would find the supposed mole the strangest of subversives. Cabinet ministers are grateful for what he is alleged to have done. Her Majesty's loyal opposition quotes the leaks with approval. The police haven't named him, but the unknown civil servant's supposed transgressions have had far more effect on government policy than his official advice ever did.

He is meant to have been revolted by the willingness of a faction in the Foreign Office to appease radical Islam. While British troops were being killed by the Taliban and al-Qaeda, it was arguing that Britain should support the Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded by admirers of fascism and whose intolerance of people of other faiths or none is well documented.

In one of the documents Angus McKee, a senior official in the Middle East and North Africa department, says diplomats should cultivate the Brotherhood in Egypt and its Palestinian subsidiary Hamas and others from the religious right and consider handing them British taxpayers' money. "Given that Islamist groups are often less corrupt than the generality of the societies in which they operate, consideration might be given to channelling aid resources through them, so long as sufficient transparency is achievable," he wrote.

The Muslim Brotherhood was delighted, naturally, and *Resalat al-Ikhwan,* its London newspaper, applauded the FO for giving it international credibility. McKee had the full support of Mockbul Ali, the Foreign Office's extraordinary adviser on Islamic issues. The leaks showed him recommending that the government approve a visit to Britain by Hossain Sayeedi, a Bangladeshi MP and member of Jamaat-i-Islami, the Muslim Brotherhood's south Asian sister organisation. Ali wasn't bothered that Sayeedi had said that the UK and the US "deserve all that is coming to them" for overthrowing the Taliban in Afghanistan; compared Bangladeshi Hindus to excrement; and that he appeared to defend attacks on the country's persecuted Ahmadiyya Muslim minority.

Ali went on to persuade John Sawyers, the FO's political director, to engage with Ken Livingstone's friend Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, even though the sheikh supports the murder of homosexuals and of Muslims who decide to abandon their religion (not to mention Israeli children), and is an enthusiast for female genital mutilation and wife-beating.

Livingstone will embrace anyone who is anti-western, and his love-in with the Muslim Brotherhood was no more than Londoners have come to expect. But McKee, Sawyers and Ali work for a Labour government which is meant to be against racism, sexism and homophobia. But then Labour leaders, most notably Jack Straw during his time at the FO, weren't at all clear about where they stood either. When the then Foreign Office minister Denis MacShane protested, he was first forced to apologise and then fired. Meanwhile the Home Office was busily pumping up the supporters of Jammaat-i-Islami on the Muslim Council of Britain as the sole legitimate representative of British Muslims, even though their support in the wider population was tiny.

Given the extent of Labour's complicity, it's easy to understand why Special Branch was determined to find the source of the leaks. But since the civil servant was suspended on full pay, there's been a revolution in Labour thinking.

Ministers began to work out that appeasement was getting nowhere. The Muslim Council of Britain wasn't going out and trying to stop young men from becoming jihadis, but stoking a grievance culture. The Muslim Brotherhood didn't listen to British diplomats and convert to feminism but carried on being as reactionary as ever. Beginning with Ruth Kelly, when she was Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, minister after minister decided the game wasn't worth the candle. Jack Straw has given no public indication that he has changed his mind, and Gordon Brown's placeman in the FO, the gloriously asinine Mark Malloch Brown, will go along with anything. But David Miliband, the new Foreign Secretary, read the leaked documents and concluded that Britain had to support liberals and democrats in the Arab world, not those who want them dead.

As his suspended employee is accused merely of helping him to see the light, wouldn't it be better if Miliband dropped the prosecution, invited him back to work and gave him a knighthood?

'Ratbiter'

HIS BRILLIANT KOREA

THE all-party parliamentary group on North Korea – which includes Ann Widdecombe, David Amess MP, Lord Ahmed and Lord Avebury among its 20 members – declares *that it wishes* "to foster democracy and democratic institutions" in Kim Jong Il's bankrupt Stalinist theme-park.

Is this aim shared by the man who provides the committee's "secretariat services", one Keith Bennett? Possibly not: for he seems to think Kim Jong Il's "democracy" is already perfect. Although he's a member of the Labour Party, his reverence for the North Korean Workers' Party is boundless.

Bennett has an interesting political CV – election agent for Keith Vaz in 1997 and 2001, he is a national council member of CND and a leading light in both the Korean Friendship and Solidarity Campaign and the International Institute of the Juche Idea, which promotes North Korea's state ideology around the world. A flavour of his views can be gleaned from a letter he sent Kim Jong Il in 2000 praising the Dear Leader's "tireless and energetic leadership and wise guidance that has successfully steered the ship of state in the DPRK through unprecedented trials and ordeals so that a bright new vista has come into view, shining clearly over the horizon and bringing a characteristic broad smile to the ever radiant image of President Kim Il Sung". (One of North Korea's many eccentricities is that Kim Il Sung remains "eternal president" despite having died more than a decade ago. No wonder he's smiling.)

Three months ago Bennett delivered a similar effusion as the main speaker at a London jamboree celebrating the 95th anniversary of Kim Il Sung's birth: "Comrades! Today the Korean revolution is being continued under the leadership of Comrade Kim Jong Il. Comrade Kim Il Sung's last great contribution in his life of 82 years was to address the question of ensuring that the revolutionary cause was handed on to a worthy successor…"

What do members of the all-party committee think about this *arslikhan*? When they return from their hols perhaps some of them will tell us.

Down on the Farm

NOTHING better illustrated how difficult the media find it these days to relate to the realities of the farming world than a chilling interview on the Today programme just after the 8am on Saturday 11 August.

John Emerson was the free-range farmer at Hunts Hill near Pirbright who three days earlier had seen every one of the 362 pigs, sheep, cattle and goats on his farm destroyed by Defra as a "precautionary" measure, after one of his pigs developed a slight limp. Two days later, Defra's FMD experts announced that his dead animals had all tested negative.

So ill-briefed was the *Today* presenter Caroline Quin that she began the interview by suggesting that he had lost "362 cattle". Politely Mr Emerson corrected her. As their exchanges continued, it became clear that they inhabited two quite different worlds.

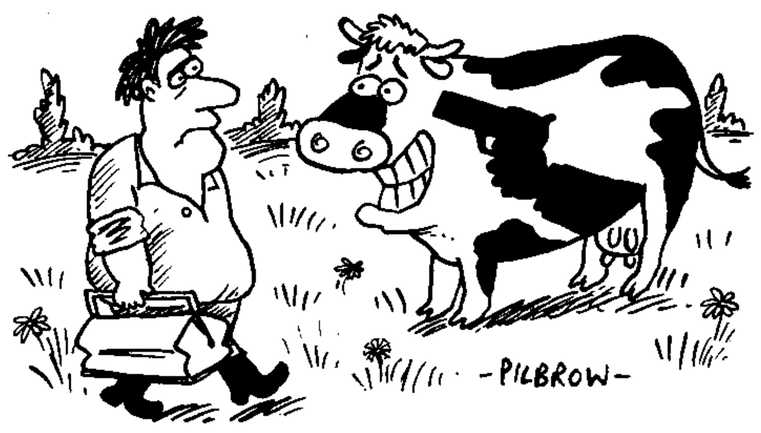
Ms Quin seemed remarkably unconcerned by the fact that Mr Emerson's entire stock had been destroyed on the basis of an official blunder, and that he had just seen his life's work wiped out for no good reason. She blithely mentioned "compensation", as if this would make up for what he had lost. When she asked him what he was up to at that moment, he began to explain that normally at that time on a Saturday morning he would have been packing up to take his meat to market, but now he had nothing left to do.

This glimpse of how completely Mr Emerson's life had been turned upside down floated right past the *Today* presenter, as she stuck to her chosen brief that not all in the farming world was "doom and gloom". She then moved on to interview Sean Rickard, the former NFU economist who is one of the BBC's favourite "farming experts", to put over the message the *Today* programme wanted its listeners to hear: that there is still plenty of money to be made out of farming, by the type of agri-business favoured by the NFU and Dr Rickard.

Almost everything about the FMD outbreak of August 2007 has been a tragic reminder of just how little has changed since the 2001 epidemic. As a symbol of Defra's catastrophic incompetence, it was of course only too appropriate that the virus should have escaped from its own cash-starved and rundown laboratory at Pirbright, which, laughably, is the "world reference centre" for research into FMD. Even though this latest outbreak seems fortunately to have been so limited, Defra has still struck another devastating blow at the livestock industry, with its ban on the movement of animals (except for slaughter) anywhere in England. If the media in general floundered in their attempts to understand what was going on, at least one comprehensive source of information has been available to anyone wanting to follow in detail the convolutions of this latest episode. One of the few bright spots of that dark time in 2001 was the website www.warmwell.com, run from near Bordeaux by an expatriate English teacher, Mary Critchley. Within weeks she had established warmwell as the most reliable clearing-house for expert information on the FMD crisis, and miraculously, having made contact with all the most authoritative scientists in the field, she has remained in business ever since.

Yet again in recent days Miss Critchley has been working overtime, telling us a great deal more than we learn from the BBC.

'Muckspreader'



TV

Britain's Favourite View (ITV1)

THERE's an obvious answer to the question: "what is Britain's favourite view?" – and that is that it's the television blithering away in the corner of the room, ideally seen from the vantage point of the sofa.

So it's a delightful irony that in recent months so many of us have gathered round the telly to watch programmes about all the great British views that we are therefore, ipso facto, not viewing.

Hot on the tail of David Dimbleby's *How We Built Britain*, this week alone you can watch *Great British Journeys*, *Robbie Coltrane's B-Road Britain*, Griff Rhys Jones scaling Britain's peaks in *Mountain*, and, on Sunday, Trevor McDonald presenting *Britain's Favourite View*. These programmes are what you might call feelgood-factual; and in a week when rumour suggests that some of the Beeb's longest-running serious factual programmes (such as the *Money Programme* and *Whistleblower*) are facing the axe, it's telling that feelgood-factual is all over the schedules.

It's a form that excels at mining that peculiarly British psychological seam where nostalgia meets fear. The idea is that the hubbub of modern life has put us out of touch with the "real" Britain – that is, the Britain where the Boche got bashed, you could set your watch by the railways and, if you left your front door open, someone would probably pop round and tidy your garden.

As luck would have it, good old TV is on hand to show us that this Britain still exists. It makes for great telly because everyone likes being told their country is something more than a cesspit; the luscious aerial photography certainly suggests as much and the potted histories that accompany such patriotic porn lend it all a gleam of worthiness.

Feelgood-factual also reflects well on television itself: it can't be merely a hateful purveyor of brain-melting slop if it serves up this warming, righteous stuff. Replete with lush landscapes, bristling crags and shady vales, we will all go to bed knowing that Britain is nothing like the doom-laden dump that will greet most of us the next morning. Merely by slumping on the couch with a ready-meal and the remote, we can rediscover the soul of this great nation, and by implication, our own lost souls.

One could argue forever about whether Britain is, or ever was, a wonderful place; but if the current logjam of programmes teaches us anything, it's that Britain's most significant totems are not views, buildings or mountains, but celebrities. David Dimbleby, Griff Rhys Jones and Robbie Coltrane, for example, appear as much a part of our heritage as Westminster Abbey. And when, in the opening sequence of *Britain's Favourite View*, Trevor McDonald is pictured next to St Michael's Tower on Glastonbury Tor, it's tough deciding which of them the programme-makers are presenting as the more significant edifice.

This sets the tone for what follows. We see some marvellous views of the South Downs, Edinburgh, the Gower Peninsula and even Blackpool; but each is introduced by the sort of celeb whose agent reckons a few more years banging out sonorous to-cameras and their client might just make National Treasure: Des Lynam, Rory Bremner, "Welsh Songbird" Katherine Jenkins and dermatological test-case David Dickinson.

Of course, the only thing you really need to know about a great view is what it looks like. And yet we have to sit through the rent-a-celeb's half-baked preamble, including why this is their favourite view (in each case it's because they grew up there) before we get to the money shot. Rory Bremner gets in a Bush joke; Des Lynam makes housewives giddy with a bit of Kipling; and Dickinson mugs inanely. Finally, they all give a docile thousand-yard-stare as the sun sets on their view of choice.

Naturally, *Britain's Favourite View* does not include a single drop of rain. It is all so deftly beguiling, conveying that all is well in this sceptred isle because a celebrity is telling you as much. And so, in your patriotic haze, you submit to the landscape and do the quintessentially British thing: reach for the phone and dial in your 35p-a-minute vote.

'The Zapper'

DUMB BRITAIN

Fox FM

Presenter: Right, I need this one, Sarah. Spinach is native to which continent?
Sarah: Er... er... er... I think... well... Sweden.
Presenter: That's a country. A wider continent.
Sarah: Oh I don't know.
Presenter: Have a guess, have a guess, any continent.
Sarah: Spain.
Presenter: That's another country.
Sarah *(laughs)*: Oh is it?

Presenter: It starts with "A".
Sarah: Argentinia *[sic]*.
Presenter: It's actually Asia, but never mind...

TalkSport

Mike Parry: You read the papers. How was Britain involved in tit-for-tat diplomacy this week?
Caller: The *Sun*? Page 3?

PLAYING SILLY BURKAS

THE silliest of all this summer's silly-season stories broke last Wednesday, when the West Midlands police and the Crown Prosecution Service issued a joint press release attacking *Undercover Mosque*, a *Dispatches* programme broadcast in January by Channel 4.

The film showed preachers at various "moderate" British mosques – notably the Green Lane mosque in Birmingham – delivering wild rants against *kuffaar* (non-Muslims). "We hate the people of *kufr*, we hate the *kuffaar*," Abu Usamah of Green Lane mosque declared, adding that although he didn't agree with terrorists "at the same time they're closer to me than those criminals of the *kufr*... He's better than a million George Bushes, Osama bin Laden, he's better than a thousand Tony Blairs, because he's a Muslim." Murtaza Khan, a teacher from Essex who preaches at many UK mosques, denounced non-Muslims as "filthy" and "accursed".

Last week's press release quoted Bethan David, a lawyer from the CPS, who alleged that the film "completely distorted what the speakers were saying" by quoting them out of context. It revealed that Inspector Knacker – aka "Anil Patani MBA, assistant chief constable (security and cohesion)" for the West Midlands force – is now making a formal complaint to Ofcom that the programme was unfair and misleading.

Had Patani bothered to check the CPS website beforehand he'd have realised that, under the legislation governing Ofcom, complaints about unfairness can come only from "the person affected" – ie someone who has been personally traduced in a programme – or by someone officially authorised by that person to act for them. Since the West Midlands police fits neither category, the "formal complaint" looks like a non-starter. It appears to be little more than a silly-season publicity stunt – though quite an effective one, as it was duly and widely reported the next day by newspapers hungry for more tales of TV fakery.

The *Eye* asked the West Midlands police why they hadn't read the rules before lodging the complaint. A spokeswoman told us that they had "liaised" with Ofcom in advance and been assured that they were following correct procedures. But is this true?

"No," said an Ofcom spokeswoman. Ofcom saw the press release a mere 10 minutes before it was issued.

Did you "liaise" with the police? "We certainly didn't."

The police also told the *Eye* that the formal complaint to Ofcom came jointly from themselves and the CPS. Again, this turns out to be untrue. But the confusion is understandable, since Bethan David of the CPS certainly aided and abetted the stunt.

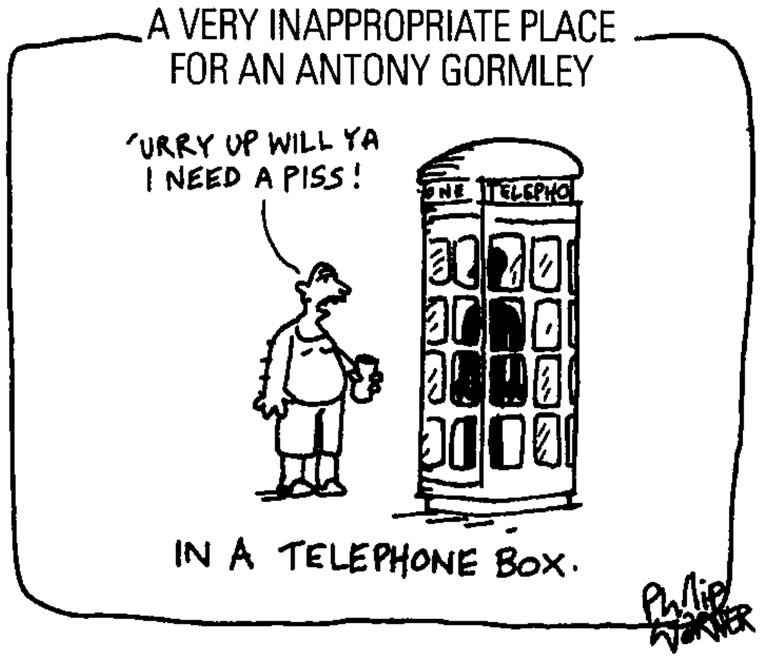
Did the police or CPS discuss their criticism of the film with C4 before issuing the press release? No. (As one bemused C4 executive observed: "This isn't what a proper police force does; it's the sort of thing Alastair Campbell does.")

Even more surprisingly, neither Patani nor David has produced one shred of evidence – in the press release, or in simultaneous letters to C4 and Ofcom – to back up their serious allegations.

Even the *Eye* wouldn't accuse a film maker of "completely distorting" the truth without giving chapter and verse – and we're not an official branch of the criminal justice system. So could the CPS please cite some examples of complete distortion that support Bethan David's defamatory attack on the film-makers' integrity?

"No," a CPS spokeswoman told us. "We don't go into that level of detail." Or indeed any detail at all. The same goes for the West Midlands police.

But Knacker may eventually have to justify wasting public money on this media stunt when he could have been tackling real criminals. He and Bethan David may also find themselves having to defend their unsubstantiated allegations in a court of law: Channel 4 and HardCash productions, the company behind the film, are considering suing the police and CPS for libel.



HORRORS! Yet another television programme has been "accused of misleading the public"!

"A row has broken out over the drama-documentary *Diana: Last Days of a Princess*, which was broadcast on Five earlier this week," the *Express* reported on 2 August.

"Mohamed Al Fayed, who agreed to cooperate with the documentary, is furious that the memory of the couple's love is being sullied by what he describes as 'grotesque inaccuracies'."

And those were, precisely? Well, mostly the fact that the docudrama – like two police inquiries before it – concluded that Diana died as the result of an accident, rather than allowing Fayed to outline his more lurid assassination theories. "I gave a lengthy interview. But the programme did not use most of it," he sobbed to his favourite newspaper.

But that was not Mr Fayed's only objection.

"Also grotesque was the actor [Nadim Sawalha] chosen to play me," he told the *Express*. "It is racial caricaturing – and that is insulting. Do the producers think that all Egyptians resemble gorillas?"

Curiously Mr Fayed did not object to Sawalha when he first played the Egyptian tycoon, in the BBC drama *Justice in Wonderland*, which dramatised his libel fight with Neil and Christine Hamilton seven years ago. Instead, he summoned Sawalha to Harrods to tell him that "he liked my portrayal very much and if a film was made of his life, I'd be his choice to play him".

Could Fayed's newfound distaste for Mr Sawalha have anything to do with the actor's 2004 one-man show *All I Want is a British Passport,* which presented audiences with what one reviewer described as the Harrods owner's "almost unhinged paranoia", to critical acclaim?

"THE question: Is anyone still watching *Big Brother*?" asked the *Guardian* wearily on 13 August.

Well, judging by one newspaper, the answer is yes: not only does it have a special section of its website devoted to the comings and goings in the *Big Brother* house, but its hacks offer a "live blog" of each eviction, complete with details of how Davina's hair looks and how "lovely" she is in person. It has also given former housemate Charley Uchea one of her few post-eviction media bookings by inviting her to speak to delegates at the Edinburgh Television Festival it sponsors.

The rag in question? The *Guardian*.

THE *Guardian* revealed last week that "controversial American blogger Matt Drudge" will be one of the star speakers at the Edinburgh TV festival later this month, pontificating on moral dilemmas in the broadcasting industry.

"Controversial" is probably the mildest epithet ever applied to Drudge by the *Grauniad* – which has previously denounced him as a "reverse sewage spigot", a "sleazemeister", a "right-wing internet hooligan" and a man who "refuses to let the facts get in the way of a good lie".

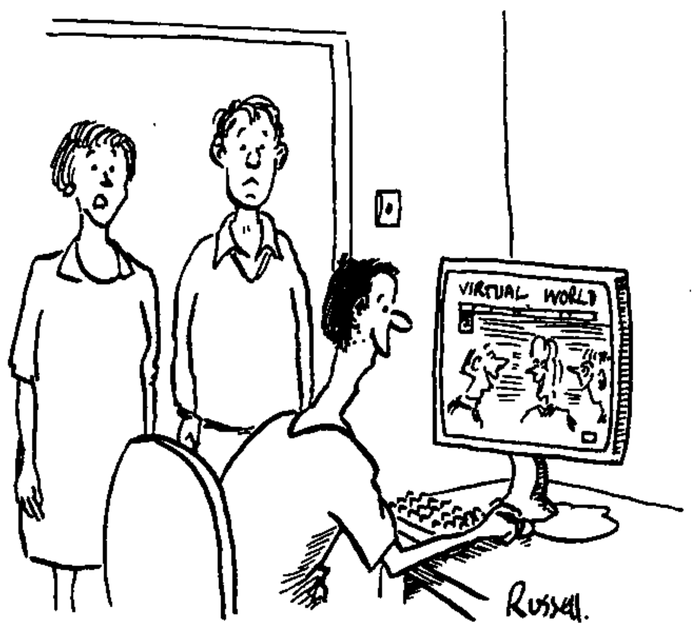
A *Guardian* piece about the blogger in 2004 was headlined: "Why Drudge is Bad for Online Journalism." So who better to deliver moral guidance at the Edinburgh international television festival – sponsored by… the *Guardian*?

WHAT exactly are the rules for BBC presenters who want to make a few quid on the side? Hardly a week seems to have gone by this summer when Gabby Logan, one of the new faces of BBC Sport, has not been busy, helping to promote some commercial product or service.

A fortnight ago she penned an extensive piece from Cowes Week for *The Times*, the content all nicely sponsored by something called St James's Palace Wealth Management and with a particular brand of German car getting a generous plug under Gabby's byline.

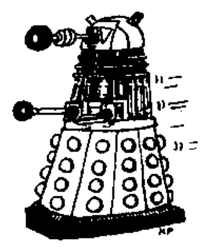
Then there was the time she generously gave to appear on the sales stand at exclusive clothing designers Bodie and Fou. And the lengthy interview she did with the *Sun* as part of her deal with the Persil "Dirt Is Good" campaign.

Perhaps there are no rules anymore but this might come as news to some of the other journalists at the BBC.



"He used to make up imaginary friends. Now the web does it for him"

BIRTSPEAK 2.0



"CBBC Creative Director Anne Gilchrist said: 'We are working towards a service which is platform neutral. Our audience does not draw the traditional distinctions between platforms and neither should we.' Charlotte Fuller, Head Of Marketing and Presentation, BBC Children's, added: 'There's some incredibly strong content coming through over the next year. Our marketing challenge is to link the new content and the already popular content such as Tracey Beaker, Shaun The Sheep and Raven back to CBBC to encourage a re-appraisal of the brand. The new campaign will reflect the DNA of the channel, that is engaging, innovative and infectious.'"

– BBC press release on new logos for channel aimed at 6 to 12-year-olds

AD NAUSEAM

TWO ADS featuring England fast bowler Matthew Hoggard show The Curse of Cash-In is still rife and that Hoggy's marketing people need to get a grip.

One was for Marston's beer, which has made a special brew in Hoggard's honour called Hoggy's Night Watchman. A blonde, full-bodied ale, it's the embodiment of Hoggard's steadfast, indefatigable, son-of the soil persona. Unveiling the new brew at the Great British Beer Festival last week, Hoggard said: "It's the perfect way to unwind after a day's play."

Unfortunately for Hoggard the beer was launched in a summer in which there have been precious few days' play for him, thanks to a chronic back injury.

In the same week an ad for Hugo Boss aftershave appeared featuring Michael Vaughan, Andrew Flintoff, Andrew Strauss and Kevin Pietersen. All of them were dressed head to toe in white and looked decidedly soigné, even rakish. And with them again was the very same Hoggard, looking as uncomfortable as a miner in a morning suit.

So which is it to be, Hoggy: yeoman or showman?

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Learn From The Experts. The George Bush School of Government Certificate in Advanced International Affairs."

– Ad spotted on the *Washington Post*'s website

SEPTEMBER will see a new marketing push from energy company NPower which will stress the company's so-called green credentials.

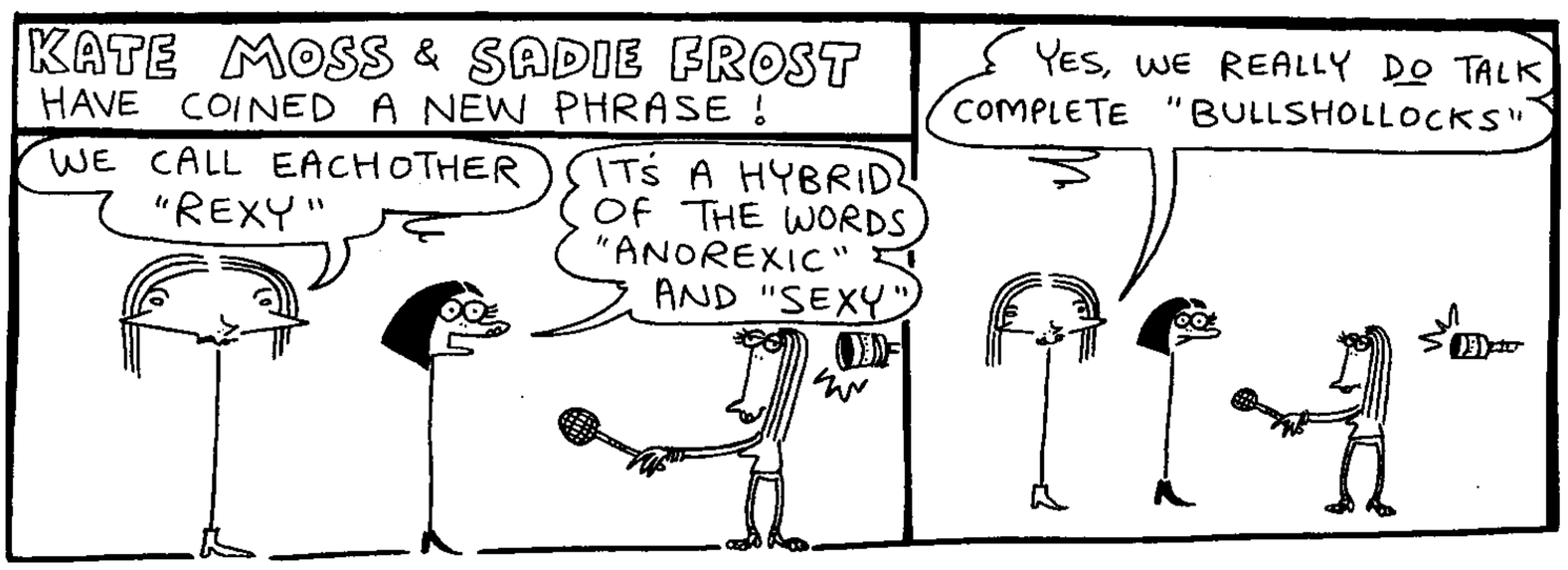
The company is particularly proud that in this campaign the medium will literally be the message. The billboard sites promoting ethical electricity are to be powered by solar panels and wind turbines sitting above.

NPower's touting of its ethical credentials is likely to go down particularly well in Oxfordshire. Since 2005 it has been trying to obtain planning permission to fill the Radley Lakes, listed as a county wildlife site and an ecologically important landscape, with pulverised fuel ash from its Didcot Power Station. Earlier this year security guards in black balaclavas accompanied a lawyer to serve an injunction on Adrian Arbib, an accredited photographer who had been taking pictures of trees in the park being cut down by NPower contractors preparing the site.

Brown hints at review of 24-hour drinking

We'll look at all this in a sober way in the autumn, with a report by the end of the year."

Financial Times


SUPERMODELS
KERBER
KATE MOSS & SADIE FROST
HAVE COINED A NEW PHRASE!
WE CALL EACHOTHER "REXY"
IT'S A HYBRID OF THE WORDS "ANOREXIC" AND "SEXY"
YES, WE REALLY DO TALK COMPLETE "BULLSHOLLOCKS"

MEDICINEBALLS

Doh!

BACK in June, the target-happy Department of Health was branded the second most dysfunctional government department, after the ho-ho Home Office.

The response from NHS chief executive David "Nibbler" Nicholson, chief medical officer Liam "Four Chins" Donaldson and permanent secretary "Hugh's Round is it Anyway?" Taylor was swift: "We shall publish a full action plan in July with clear timetables and deliverables."

Alas, the deliverables haven't been delivered… and the action plan has been put off until September. Any hospital manager who missed a vital DoH target by two months would be caned. But the DoH top brass have a watertight excuse for missing their own target: "We have yet to set out a clearly articulated vision of the future."

How the BMA works

In June, M.D. received serious allegations about the IT system used by the BMA. These related to the competence of the IT management team and the new IT membership system, the soaring costs of the new system and the extra employees needed to run it, and allegations about the selling of the BMA database.

In addition, it was claimed that an external audit signed off by KMPG failed to uncover any of these problems and "bore very little resemblance to reality".

Given that the BMA is my union, or at least it was before I resigned 10 years ago, I thought I'd give it a chance to sort it out. So I sent a cordial email to the chief executive, Tony Bourne.

Dear Mr Bourne,

I have received the following allegations about IT management at the BMA, quoted verbatim, which I would like to give you the opportunity to respond to. Please let me know your thoughts as to the veracity of the claims, and any steps you will be taking to investigate the matter further. I am sure you are aware of the Public Interest Disclosure Act, which protects genuine whistleblowers from victimization and dismissal. Your swift response would be appreciated.

It arrived on the following day.

Dear Dr Hammond

In relation to your email sent on 20 June 2007, we take grave exception to your article, which is both factually inaccurate and seriously defamatory. We reject your allegations in their entirety and reserve our legal position.

Yours faithfully
Matthew O'Flynn
Solicitor, BMA

M.D. then contacted senior doctors on the BMA council. As a result, the allegations "rejected in their entirety" are now the basis of a "thorough internal investigation". The team comprises the head of the legal department, the head of human resources and another lawyer, but no one representing the membership of the BMA, whose privacy and finances may have been squandered. Mr Bourne has, however, sent me a thoughtful letter inviting me to rejoin my union.

M.D.

SIGNAL FAILURES

Fat controllers

IN a rare outbreak of joined-up government, the Department of Health is urging people to lose weight just as the Department for Transport is trying to squeeze more people into unsuitable trains.

Transport mandarins pretend otherwise, of course. Their rail white paper states: "The mean adult Body Mass Index for males increased from 26kg/metre in 1993 to 27 in 2005. Physical trends such as these need to be monitored and factored into the design of trains and stations."

In fact the extra carriages promised by 2014 are only 10 percent of the current fleet and the government expects demand to rise by 23 percent.

When Virgin CrossCountry introduced its Voyager train, it ditched the quaint idea that standard-class passengers should be allowed to stretch their legs forward and not have to jostle the adjacent passenger for elbow room on journeys from Penzance to Aberdeen. Half the problem was the train's narrowness to enable it to tilt in tunnels. The other was to put three wheelchair-accessible toilets into a four-carriage train.

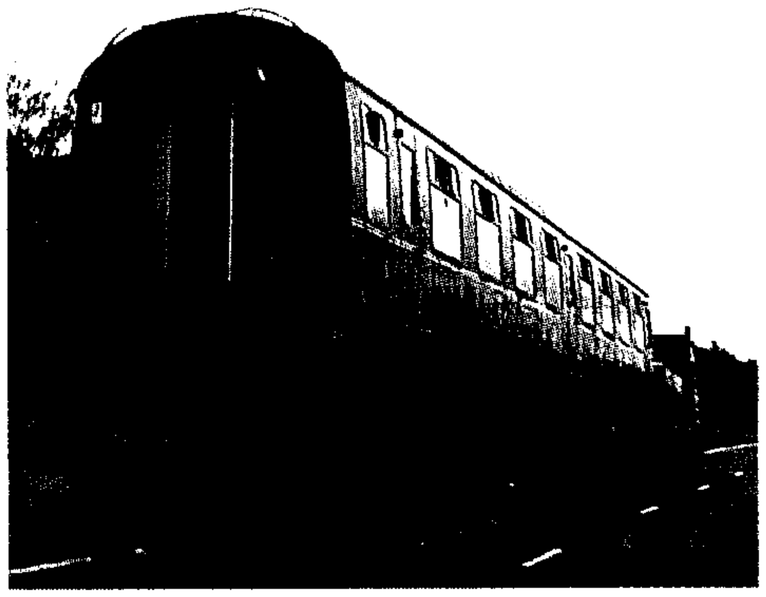
Arriva will remove one toilet and the onboard shop after taking over CrossCountry in November. Will that mean more legroom per seat? No. The transport department, which specified Arriva's franchise, says each four-carriage train will get 14 more seats. No mention of factoring in "physical trends" there.

The new South West Trains franchise – also specified by the transport department while it prepared the white paper – involved dumping 120 carriages and switching suburban trains to the Portsmouth line, where instead of two standard-class seats either side of the aisle there are now three on one side, two the other, and the seats are smaller. Passengers are reluctant to pack in three deep; often there are still only four passengers sat in each row, but the ones in the pair of seats are squeezed closer together than before and the aisle is so narrow that it's "extremely difficult to pass through the seats without bashing someone", in one passenger's words.

Growing obesity hasn't been factored into the measurements although these are new trains supposed to last more than 30 years. But at least SWT can boast of "1,700 extra seats" on the Portsmouth line.

Passengers even feel the pinch in first class. One Portsmouth commuter who measured his seat and legroom reckons his personal space in first class has shrunk by 21 percent – and is now 9 percent less than he would have had in standard class previously.

For greater London local routes SWT will remove seats to create more standing space, but the extra capacity won by this trick diminishes as waistlines expand and the number of standing passengers per square metre reduces.



Seen on the A1: Government affirms commitment to rail freight

HERE's another pearl of wisdom from the mandarins who wrote the rail white paper: "Where rail is one of several travel options for passengers, fares are unregulated. Operators have matched fares to the requirements of the different markets they serve."

Meanwhile in the real world train operators are exploiting captive passengers. The regulated "saver" fare is for off-peak travel, so Virgin and others have extended the periods they class as peak. That leaves them free to charge eye-watering unregulated fares when London motorways are packed. It's only when traffic congestion eases and rail becomes "one of several travel options" that regulated saver tickets come into play.

Train operators have matched fares to their requirements for profits. Seven years ago Virgin admitted (*Eye* 994) it had banned discounted fares from mostly empty morning trains from Manchester because some business travellers had bought them instead of paying full price. There's a "market" that requires travel at reasonable prices to or from London in Virgin's so-called peaks, but Virgin removed fares which matched that market's requirements.

PS: Rail minister Tom Harris wasn't happy when the *Times* said ministers had ordered fare rises. "Unregulated fares are set entirely at the commercial discretion of train operators, and the department emphatically does not seek to influence their decisions," he wrote. His department specifies how many services each franchise must provide and the trains they can hire to do so, then awards the franchise to the bidder offering the highest premium (or lowest subsidy demand). But apparently that's unconnected to each new franchise's awesome fare rises.

'Dr B. Ching'

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELDS

A SPAT between two Lancashire councils over whether to build over playing fields goes before a public inquiry this week.

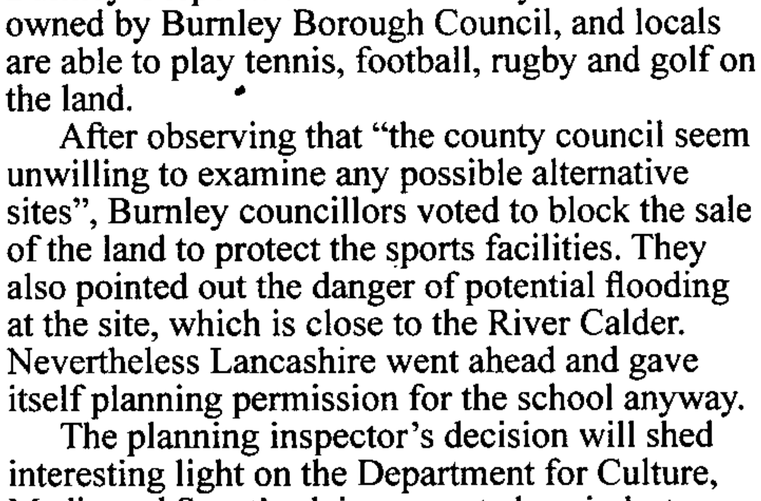
Lancashire county council will try to use a compulsory purchase order to prise Towneley playing fields from the protection of Burnley council. The county wants to build a huge superschool, Unity College, on the public pitches that lie within the historic grounds of Towneley Hall (*Eye* 1151).

The hall and park were sold to what was then Burnley Corporation in 1901. They are still owned by Burnley Borough Council, and locals are able to play tennis, football, rugby and golf on the land.

After observing that "the county council seem unwilling to examine any possible alternative sites", Burnley councillors voted to block the sale of the land to protect the sports facilities. They also pointed out the danger of potential flooding at the site, which is close to the River Calder. Nevertheless Lancashire went ahead and gave itself planning permission for the school anyway.

The planning inspector's decision will shed interesting light on the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's claim, repeated again last month, that playing fields "have the best ever protection through Government planning regulations" because schools are not allowed to sell fields that are needed for sport.

What it didn't mention is that hundreds of schools, just like Unity College, are set to move sites to be rebuilt under the government's Building Schools for the Future project, therefore putting their playing fields at risk once more.



NEWCASTLE YOUTH TEN PINT BOWLING CLUB: Saturdays, 10am, ages 7-17. (0191)264 824.

Chronicle Extra

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

BISH-BOSH, JOSH DOSH

DEVELOPER Josh Arghiros, the man behind the controversial Frank Gehry-designed "faulty towers" scheme to build 750 flats high above Hove's Regency terraces, "greeted" councillors who were about to determine his planning application "in a very friendly way", according to one of a "rent-a-mob" of drama students paid to feign public support for the scheme at Skidrow-on-Sea's planning committee in March.

Student X was one of a group of 15 to 20 young people, mostly from the Brighton Academy of Creative Training, who were hired via an agency called Jabberwocky, which boasts on its website that it "provides every type of performer imaginable".

The students were told they were going to be in a "crowd scene for a film". They were told to meet around the corner from Hove Town Hall, where they were greeted by Jabberwocky boss Phoebe Oliver and "Dosh" Arghiros. "Phoebe handed out placards with slogans such as 'Yes to King Alfred' and told us what to chant," said X. "Mr Arghiros thanked us all for coming."

The students now realised they were taking part in a fake demo, not a film, but none dropped out. When the "demo" was over Phoebe paid each of them £60 in cash and, after a conversation with Dosh, offered the same again to a group who were told to crowd into the public gallery to jeer opposition councillors.

Student X said: "On reflection I know it was a bad thing to do. It goes against everything this country is supposed to be about, if people with a bit of money can manipulate things like this. It's not democratic. We were told the people opposing the scheme didn't want any development on the King Alfred site. In fact they just want a better scheme than this. They had some very fair arguments and they weren't heard."

A spokeswoman for developer Karis last week denied that anyone had been paid by the firm to demonstrate in favour of the scheme at the planning meeting. But Karis statements and the facts have been at variance before. In 2005 Arghiros claimed actor Brad Pitt was "excited" about joining the "design team" for the scheme (*Eyes passim*). He was not involved in any way.

PS: *Eye* 1189 reported that "Karis Limited"'s accounts were long overdue, that the last ones filed, for 2004, showed a deficit of nearly £2m and carried an auditor's disclaimer. To avoid any confusion, the full name of the company named in that story should have been given as Karis (King Alfred Developments) Limited, of which the principal director is one J. Arghiros.

● **ISLINGTON council has been kicked out of the annual "Best Council to Work For" awards after being caught offering inducements – in the form of an extra day's leave – to employees who wrote in to the *Sunday Times*-sponsored survey to say what an absolutely wonderful place it is to work. The council was told three times by the organizers to desist from offering the free time off but continued to do so. Perhaps they should go in for the "Bent Council" award instead.**

DRUNKS OF THE MONTH

IT'S A tough life being a councillor, so no wonder so many are seeking solace in the bottle.

Pressure is on Cllr Denise Capstick, former Lib Dem mayor of Southwark, to resign after she was caught driving over the limit and banned for 18 months. Cllr Capstick's £43,000 pa health portfolio includes overseeing services "to those with… drug and alcohol problems".

Also keen on health promotion is South Norfolk district councillor Keith Tilcock, who has been banned and fined £425 for driving while over the limit. The Tory represents the council on Active Norfolk, a body which promotes healthy lifestyles, and in May his election literature declared the Tories would "tackle anti-social behaviour" (including drunk-driving, presumably).

He was arrested after being seen driving erratically at the Norfolk and Norwich University hospital in the early hours before getting out of his car and pissing in the grounds. But perhaps one should not be too hard on him. As Tilcock's lawyer told puzzled magistrates: "A wild cat came into the house and attacked his wife quite ferociously. It was a rather shocking and unfortunate situation but it does explain why he found himself driving with excess alcohol."

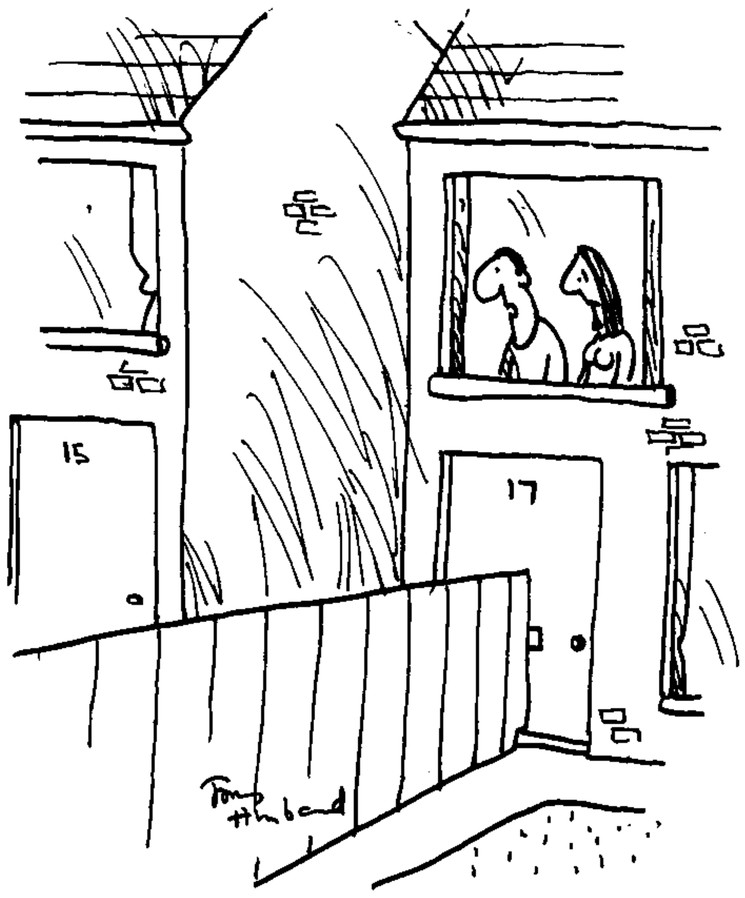
COOKED-UP IN KETTERING

ONE CHAUFFEUR who has never touched a drop while on duty is Rick Hammond, who had 41 years unblemished service at Tory Kettering council until he was sacked in 2005 after falling foul of a new management team, for reasons that are still not clear.

Hammond, 58, started as a general labourer for the council while a teenager and had worked since 1984 as the "mayor's officer", driver and mace bearer. One former mayor described him as "almost a national treasure" when he celebrated 40 years with the council. Yet months later, Hammond could suddenly do nothing right.

First he faced a disciplinary hearing for stubbing out a cigarette on the ground in the council car park. As he is an asthmatic who has never smoked, Hammond did not have much trouble getting that dropped. Then he was accused of claiming pay for more hours than he had actually worked. As he could prove that the reverse was actually true, that accusation did not stick either.

The next one was more serious: he was accused of stealing fuel from his employer. Quite what Hammond would have done with the can of petrol he was seen filling up, given that his own car runs on diesel, was not clear. The most likely explanation was what Hammond said it was – that the can was a reserve to be kept in the boot in case the mayoral car ran out. But the truth wasn't good enough for Kettering chief executive David Cook and his senior officers. Hammond was reported to the police, arrested, hauled down to the station and fingerprinted – before being released without charge by an apologetic Knacker. Nevertheless Hammond was still sacked.



"You're right, their new fence does encroach on our land"

Last year he took the council to an employment tribunal, which found he was unfairly dismissed and awarded him £42,000. The council had six months in which to pay or mount an appeal. It did neither. Last month the employment appeals tribunal in London confirmed Hammond's award. The council finally paid up, 206 days late, after spending tens of thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money persecuting an innocent man who has seen his life savings and health go down the drain. Top work!

CLUELESS, SANDY

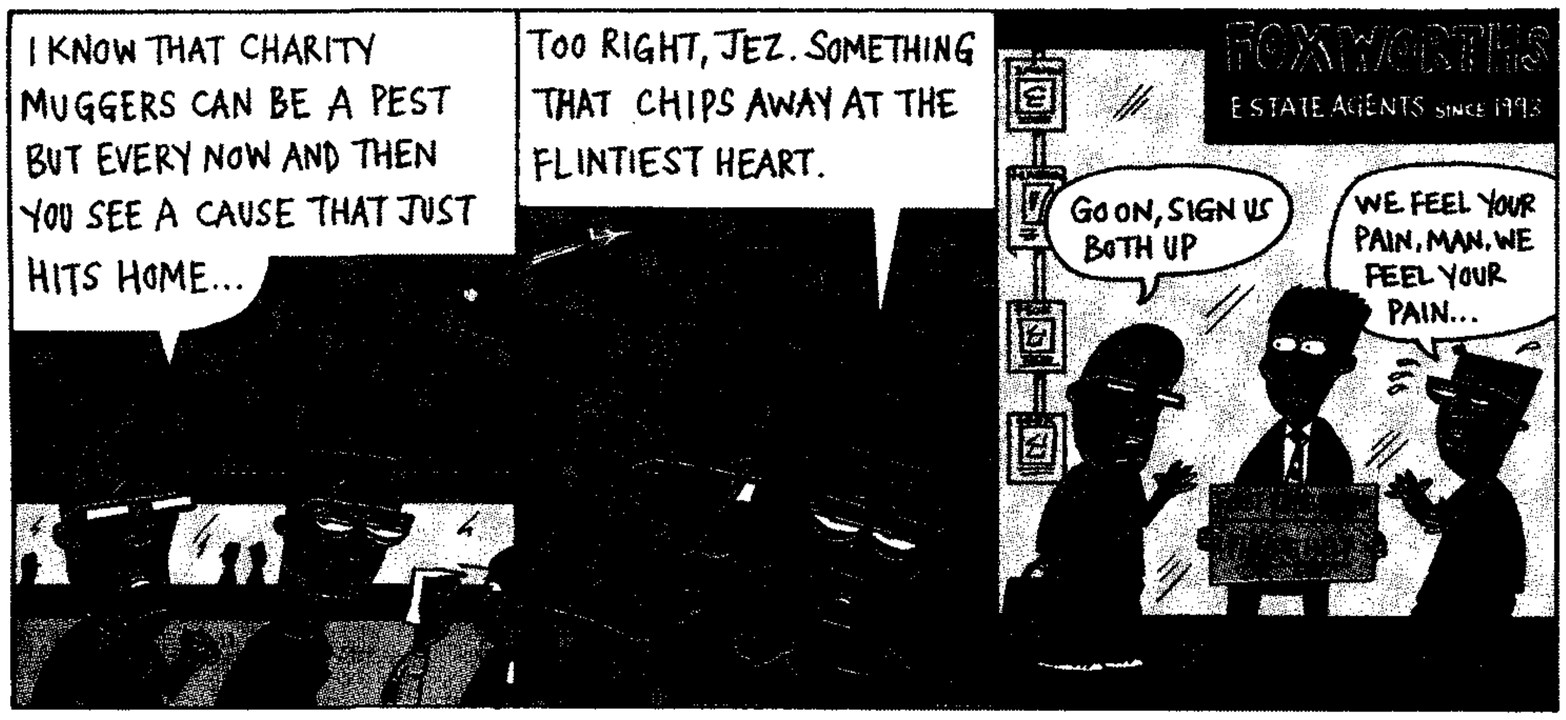
JUST weeks after Shetland Island Council (SIC) chief executive Morgan Goodlad was censured by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman for failing to declare an interest when the council pumped £1m into a fish farm owned by his brother, his old chum Sandy Cluness, the council's convenor (leader), has received a similar bollocking-lite.

Like Goodlad, Cluness has received a "censure", in this case from the Standards Commission for Scotland, for failing to register more than £15,000 he received from a shipping company, Smyril Line, and a fisheries training trust. Cluness, while being paid as a director of Smyril Line, had worked on a deal to keep Smyril sailing to Shetland – at a cost of nearly £700,000 in public money.

The investigation into Cluness was launched following a complaint by Lerwick resident Michael Peterson. After Goodlad's "censure", Peterson told the *Shetland Times*: "Making the SIC's convener and chief executive set the ethical agenda for councillors and employees is like Jeffrey Archer and Jonathan Aitken establishing a school of public governance."

● **JOBLESS people in Wolverhampton can breathe a sigh of relief. Graham Mackenzie is coming to their rescue. Wolverhampton city council's Labour leader Roger Lawrence said he was "delighted" about Mackenzie's appointment as chairman of a new quango, the Wolverhampton Development Company. He said he hoped "Graham will encourage private sector partners" to bring "job opportunities" and "regeneration". Not everyone is convinced, alas. In a former life Mackenzie was chief executive of ASW, the steel-maker that collapsed in 2002 leaving 1,300 workers in Cardiff, Belfast and Sheerness unemployed and minus their pensions.**

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER


I KNOW THAT CHARITY MUGGERS CAN BE A PEST BUT EVERY NOW AND THEN YOU SEE A CAUSE THAT JUST HITS HOME...
TOO RIGHT, JEZ. SOMETHING THAT CHIPS AWAY AT THE FLINTIEST HEART.
FOXTWORTHS
ESTATE AGENTS SINCE 1993
GO ON, SIGN US BOTH UP
WE FEEL YOUR PAIN, MAN. WE FEEL YOUR PAIN...

NOOKS and CORNERS

RESTORATION is a dangerous time for historic buildings because that is when they are at the mercy of workmen wielding blow-torches. Wren's church of St Mary-at-Hill in the City of London, and Uppark, the great Georgian house *in* Sussex owned by the National Trust, were both destroyed by fire in recent years while being repaired by men with blow-torches. Both had then to be restored – in the case of Uppark recreated – at huge extra cost.

The Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras is the latest victim. After decades of neglect following British Railways' attempt to demolish it in 1966, Gilbert Scott's great Gothic Revival masterpiece is being restored as part of the project to make St Pancras the new Eurostar terminus for London. The upper floors will house private luxury apartments while the lower ones are to reopen as a Marriott hotel: the "Renaissance St Pancras Hotel London" – a silly name given that it's a Gothic building and that Gothic Revival architects despised the Renaissance. But I digress. This work is being carried out by the Manhattan Loft Corporation.

Late last month thick black smoke and flames suddenly began pouring from the windows on the west side of the entrance wing. The Euston Road was closed and the British Library evacuated, but the fire was soon put out by the London Fire Brigade before gas cylinders on the premises could explode. So far so good.

London and Continental Railways, which owns the building, insists the restoration will still be completed on time (the Eurostar terminal in W.H. Barlow's stupendous 1868 train shed opens in November). But there has been a conspicuous

silence from both L&C and the Manhattan Loft Corporation about what happened and why – and about what damage was done to the interior of this grade I-listed building.

The fire began in the basement of the hotel and was started by demolition contractors who were "hot working" to strip out pipes in a service duct. The fire spread rapidly up the duct to the ground floor and the floors above. The most damage was done to the old hotel entrance hall (pictured) opening off the Euston Road. This is an elaborate interior with a gilded and carved stone and marble screen and painted decoration. It survived the closing of the old hotel in 1935 and the subsequent neglect. Now the stone screen has been destroyed and the stone surrounds to the windows are damaged, as are the wall surfaces. It can all be recreated – but it won't be the same. Original fabric of the 1870s has been lost.

This was not the first fire during the St Pancras restoration. Earlier, fire broke out in the East Side Buildings of the station and it is rumoured that two original large oak dray road doors were destroyed. In each case the contractor was Laing O'Rourke, the firm formed by the merger of Laing's and the concrete specialists founded by Ray O'Rourke. This firm – "Intelligent Thinking, Intelligent Construction" – was part of the consortium that began work on the station project. Whatever its merits, it is not a firm known for its expertise or indeed interest in the field of conservation.

Accidents will happen, of course: but why was a contractor with no conservation experience entrusted with the restoration of a grade I-listed building of the highest quality? And why have the lessons of Uppark and St Mary-at-Hill still not been learned?

GOOD NEWS! A public inquiry has turned down the application for a monstrous residential development by Foster & Partners in Chelsea (Eye 1182). This means the decent Edwardian Board School in Glebe Place and the clever 1970s Inner Court complex off Old Church Street are safe. In contrast to the sycophantic adulation normally directed at Norman Foster, the inspector criticised the "poor neighbourly effect" of the proposed gated luxury flat development: "a large, monolithic structure, far exceeding the size of houses and buildings in the area".

In addition, Eric Parry's proposed blue ceramic and glass extension to the Holburne Museum in Bath has also been turned down (Eyes 1186 & 1187). Despite its usual tendency to be childishly ashamed of the fact that Bath is a beautiful city and a World Heritage Site, Bath & North East Somerset council has recognised that the gratuitously assertive and discordant design had provoked strong local opposition. Stephen Marks, the former principal planning inspector for Bath, pointed out that the scheme "breaks every official policy for the protection of the historic environment. Failure to observe these policies… would do huge damage to every historic facet of this sensitive area, creating a dreadful precedent".

In a crude attempt at blackmail, director Alexander Sturgis has said that if the development does not go ahead, his museum will have to close. Nonsense. All he needs to do is commission a design for an extension that is not a posturing "landmark" but respects the character of Sussex Gardens and is in sympathy with the existing (listed) stone Classical building. That is something architects could once do with ease

'Piloti'

Letter from **Ankara**

from Our Own Correspondent

SINCE last month's general election the police cells in Ankara and Istanbul could not have been busier.

Heading inside through the revolving door that is Turkey's judicial system have been all those deputies who lost their immunity from prosecution when they lost their parliamentary seats.

Such is our brand of democracy that some 59 deposed MPs are now facing prosecution. Thirty three of these are from the ruling AKP, or Justice and Development Party (against whom 218 other cases were pending); and 15 are former deputies from the chief opposition Republican People's Party (CHP). Together they face charges related to everything from misconduct and embezzlement to the issuing of false papers and bent tendering procedures.

The star among those newly exposed to the long hand of the law is Mehmet Aga, who resigned as leader of the centre-right Democrat Party following such a hammering at the polls that he too lost his seat.

Back in 1996, as Interior Minister, he was a key suspect in the so-called Susurluk scandal when a car crash in the Anatolian town of Susurluk revealed some strange travelling companions. In the wreckage of a Mercedes which had hit a truck at high speed, police found a former Istanbul police chief (dead); a feudal Kurdish warlord who was also an MP in Aga's party (unconscious); a wanted gangster and right-wing hit man (dead); and the wanted gangster's girlfriend (also dead). In the boot of the car was an assortment of goodies including heroin, guns, diplomatic passports and documents. And who had allegedly authorised many of these official documents, including a parliamentary car park pass for the said gangster, who was wanted by Interpol? Why Mr Aga.

The only survivor in the car – the warlord Sedat Bucak, whose clan is fiercely pro-Turkish in the continuing war between Kurdish separatists and the Turkish army – has claimed loss of memory since the crash. Our rigorous criminal prosecution service deemed this strong enough to let him go (although as he also had parliamentary immunity at the time, he couldn't really have been prosecuted anyway).

This being Turkey, the only person in the whole incident who *was* successfully convicted was the poor old truck driver –despite evidence that he had been stationary when the Mercedes slammed into the back of his lorry.

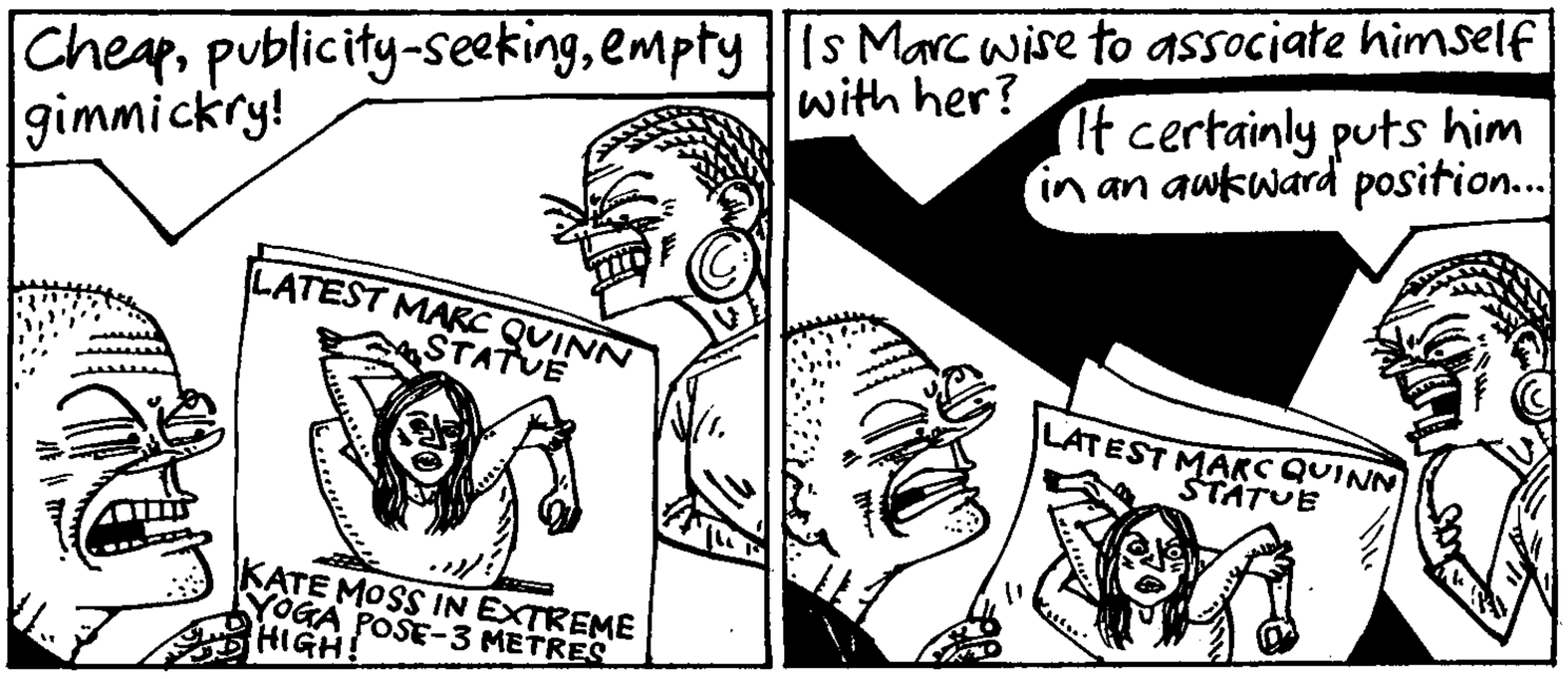
Meanwhile, those who won seats in the general election also gained immunity from prosecution. Among those heading out of custody to freedom was a smiling Sebahat Tuncel, elected for the pro-Kurdish Democratic Turkey Party (DTP). Thanks to a cunning plan, the DTP stood all its members as independents to get round a quota obstacle designed to stop Kurdish parties from entering our hallowed Grand National Assembly. Now that she is there, Tuncel can walk away from charges that she was a member of an outlawed terrorist group, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK).

Of course there are winners and losers in any democratic process; but our state is particularly generous in granting our lawmakers full judicial immunity – something that can only be lifted by parliamentary vote. Nor can our civil service chiefs be arrested, detained or interrogated by police without a similar vote. This means our top bureaucrats feel unrestrained when making their customary tough-but-fair decisions on tenders, procurements and so on.

At the previous elections in 2002, concerns about corruption led both the AKP and CHP to say that once in office they would change the immunity law. Strangely, nothing happened. However, it must surely be at the top of the agenda again, with the AKP back in office and the CHP the chief opposition. In fact we ordinary voters aren't holding our breath. The hundreds of deputies who were saved by the polls from court action may just kick the idea into the long grass again.

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


Cheap, publicity-seeking, empty gimmickry!
LATEST MARC QUINN STATUE
KATE MOSS IN EXTREME YOGA POSE-3 METRES HIGH!
Is Marc wise to associate himself with her?
It certainly puts him in an awkward position...
LATEST MARC QUINN STATUE

Letters

Political reversal

Sir,

In your rush to get out issue No. 1190 with a recent, topical photograph on the front cover the captions seem to have been reversed. I trust that you will publish a correction in the next edition to clear up any confusion.

Faithfully,
ROBERT STOKELY,

Via email.

Brownfield plight

Sir,

In your latest issue you cast doubt on the Prime Minister's assumption that sufficient "brownfield" sites exist to provide affordable housing. If anything, the figures he has come out with are underestimates. Almost every reader will be aware of derelict houses, shops and factories, or places where buildings once stood but are now used as tiny car parks, in their home towns. So why aren't they being built upon?

The fact is that many of these were bought by speculators during the three recessions of the 1980s and early 1990s. Since then the value of the land they occupy has risen exponentially, with land bought for thousands now worth hundreds of thousands – but once built upon they attract taxes and business charges. The speculators can use the land at its current value as security in all sorts of wheeling and dealing (which is, after all, what speculators do) because there is no tax levied on the increase in value of land – but once built upon they become taxable assets. Experience around the world – in places as politically divided as Hungary and certain cities in the United States – shows that when land value is taxed, buildings start going up on derelict sites. Prime Minister Brown needs to look at this urgently, since a Land Value Tax will make more than enough sites available for housing and could even lead to house prices falling. But then we can't go upsetting the Daily Mail, can we?

STEVE WILSON,

London E6.

Cat flap

Sir,

I cannot believe that after 36 years of reading PE, I'm finally getting a chance to write because of an error on your part – I'm assuming that it is deliberate and I've missed the joke? In the citation for Cat Stevens' honorary degree, every schoolboy of my addled generation with a modicum of Latin knows that Cat is Feles, and Felix is something quite different.

JONATHAN DUKE-COHAN

Boston, US.

News flash-flood

Sir,

I know journalists are a long-lived breed, so could this woodcut of "A True report of certaine wonderfull ouerflowings of Waters" be in any way related to the front pages of every newspaper in the country over the last few weeks? It was even printed in London.

Yours faithfully,
MISS ENA B. JONES

Bristol

Missing plug

Sir,

I'm not sure whose lugs logged my supposed plugs for Waitrose on the Food Programme, but might he or she be remunerated with tokens redeemable against the purchase of a hearing aid? The word Waitrose never passed my lips once in the programme. Whereas I mentioned Tesco once, Sainsbury's twice and Asda three times, concluding the programme with a eulogy for two Hungarian wines exclusively available from independent wine merchants.

Genially yours,
ANDREW JEFFORD,

Via email.

Sir,

You have clearly been fossicking in the poo for too long. Anyone who has had even the briefest of dealings with Andrew Jefford would know that an allegation of venality is laughable. The truth is he floats on an ethereal plane so far above Carlisle Street as to make him completely incomprehensible to you. You should plead with him to wash away your sins with a nice Chablis.

KATIE BARRETT,

Via email.

Sky ad's the limit

Sir,

Eye 1190 has, as usual, a few very justifiable exposés of the Murdoch "news" empire.

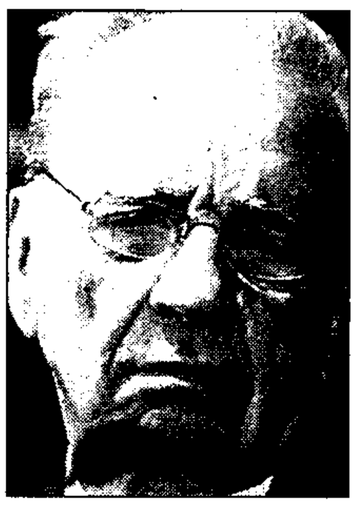
I'm left wondering, however, how your Corporate Director of Ethics and Media Solutions has allowed an advertisement for Sky to occupy the whole back page of this issue.

I think we should be told.

Crivens,
MICHAEL DENHOLM,

Dunbar, E. Lothian.

Lookalike



Davros

Murdoch

Sir,

I could not help noticing the uncanny similarity between Davros and Rupert Murdoch. One, of course, is often considered one of the most evil beings in the known universe, while the other merely invented the Daleks. I think the Doctor should be told.

Yours etc,
ALASDAIR MCGREGOR,

Via email.

Falling standards

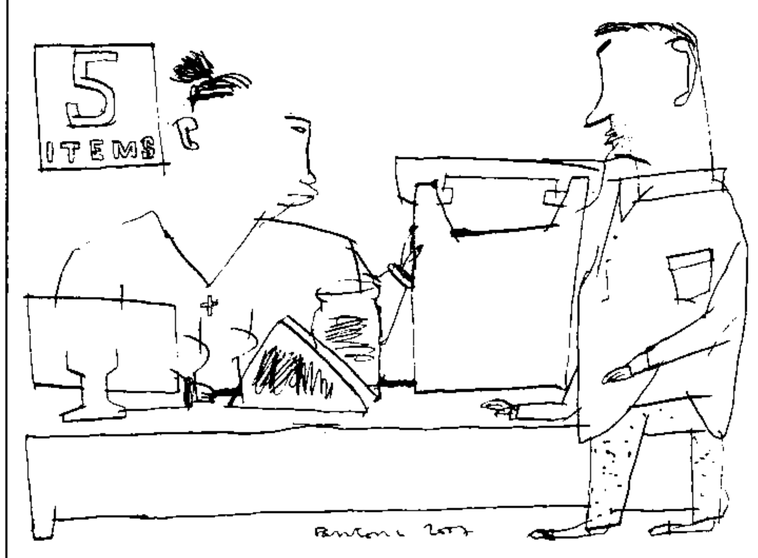
Sir,

You call Andrew Robathan MP a "Classic Tory idiot" because he complained about Galloway to the standards committee, despite the fact that he (Galloway) "has been one of Labour's fiercest critics". Your organ used to expect MPs to put morality before narrow party interest. When was this policy reversed – and more importantly, why? Shome shlight mishtake perhaps, as I can't believe you support the Gorgeous One.

Best Wishes (& still subscribing),
COLIN MACDONALD,

Nottingham.

Scenes You Seldom See



"No, thanks... I don't need a plastic bag just to carry a sandwich and a can of lager"

Remote control freak

Sir,

With the millions of examples of bad, unimaginative, generic, crass programming that swamp our schedules, I was stunned to see Remote Controller attack two of the most literate, witty and enjoyable shows to have come from the US this year. And with such baseless and petulant criticisms, too.

"Heroes," we are told, "depends on a belief in America as a benevolent World power." In what way exactly? Bearing in mind that many of the show's sympathetic protagonists hail from places as far afield as Japan and India, and that all of the "bad guys" are American and all but one are involved either with American big business or US high-level politics, that doesn't seem much of an argument. It's about individualism, responsibility and choices, it's not about American superiority and nobody who had actually watched the show to any great degree would think it was.

As for "Studio 60" using "trade speak" – well that's because that's how the people in the trade that it's depicting speak! Remote controller obviously understood what they meant by phrases such as "It killed at dress", and so would the viewers who choose to watch a show about the entertainment industry. My dad once told me that whenever anyone says "I understand it, but other people wouldn't", I should be suspicious of what makes the speaker so damn superior.

I had always thought that the Eye was against dumbing down of the arts and Television, yet here is Remote controller using it as a reason to slate the two best US imports currently on UK screens. If the best target you can find in the smorgasbord of moronic crap on British TV is something that you think might be too clever, then I think you've lost the plot a little.

MAT RICARDO,

London.

"Oh dear... we seem to have run out of solar energy"

Pro-badger smoothie

Sir,

I would like to start by saying that I am not one of the woolly-thinking anaemics who believe animals share the same rights as humans. Indeed, if it were scientifically proven that the most effective way to prevent the spread of TB in cattle were to put each badger individually into a blender on the slowest setting then, with a sentimental tear for Mr Brock, I would have my own finger on the Moulinex.

However, Muckspreader (Eye 1190) appears to be acting as a mouthpiece for the NFU, an unfortunate stance given their Luddite attitude to science and reason. The Randomised Badger Culling Trial, a nine-year study into the effects of various types of badger-culling whose results were recently released, showed that badger culling did not decrease the instances of bovine TB. In fact it showed that culling disturbed the badgers, who fled across the countryside and – being already a little under the weather – hacked and coughed over every cow they met en route. This led to an increase in bovine TB.

All the best,
ALEX LEITHES,

Via email.

Sir,

Muckspreader continues to whip up hatred amongst farmers for badgers by calling for culling the species, despite the publication by the four leading scientists working on the problem, Vincente, Delahay, Walker and Cheeseman, in the "Journal for Animal Ecology", 2007 (76, 348-360) who categorically conclude that badger culling would, in fact, enhance the spread of bTB rather than cure the problem.

Why should the highly respected Badger Trust, the Wildlife Trusts and the RSPCA, who all oppose culling, not want to eliminate bTB in badgers by culls if it was thought that this would work? I served for eight years on the Government's Advisory Panel on bTB on behalf of the Mammal Society and certainly would agree, but the evidence points the other way. The NFU and farming press continues to flog this scapegoat in the blame culture of modern Britain. The disease is a cattle-to-cattle problem and wherever in the world testing and culling of cattle is properly carried out, the disease also dies out in the wildlife that have been infected.

With every good wish,
MICHAEL CLARK,

Welwyn, Herts.

Posh tosh

Sir,

I wouldn't want to trivialise the sacking of Michael Hunt from the Wexford Music Festival (Music and Musicians, Eye 1190), but...

I find it hilarious that an article in a publication run by English ex-public school boys should criticise the Irish for being elitist, stuffed-shirt snobs!

The times they are a-changing, begorrah.

Regards,
ROGER INKPEN,

Portsmouth.

"I'm sorry, sir... I can't discuss individual cases"

In the frame

Sir,

Alexander Keith is correct to point out (Letters, Eye 1190) that Thomson (Scottish) and Thompson (English) are differently named. But Thomson and Thompson are also different in appearance; the difference is visible wherever they are portrayed. In one frame of one Tintin book it becomes apparent which is Thomson and which is Thompson. Go to it, anoraks.

Yours sincerely,
ALASDAIR DRYSDALE,

Via email.

Sir,

I laughed out loud at "Tintin in the Quango" (Eye 1189). It seems that Herge's paternalistic colonialism, racially insensitive illustrations of Africans and cavalier approach to killing wildlife doesn't sit too well with today's audiences and may even harm the prospects of Spielberg's rumoured forthcoming Tintin film at the box office.

Nevertheless, in some ways "Tintin in the Congo" seems profoundly topical: on the bottom of page 50, the boy reporter intercepts a letter to an assassin from a shadowy presence known only by his initials. It reads: "Secret. 1. Get rid of the reporter Tintin, by any means, making it appear an accident. 2. Whether you succeed or not, rendezvous on March 31st, at Kalabelou, under the great lone palm tree, at noon. 3. Further instructions will be given to you there. A.C."

Imagine my sense of disappointment to discover later in the book that the note had come from Al Capone and not from Alastair Campbell after all.

Yours faithfully,
GEORGE SIK,

Surrey.

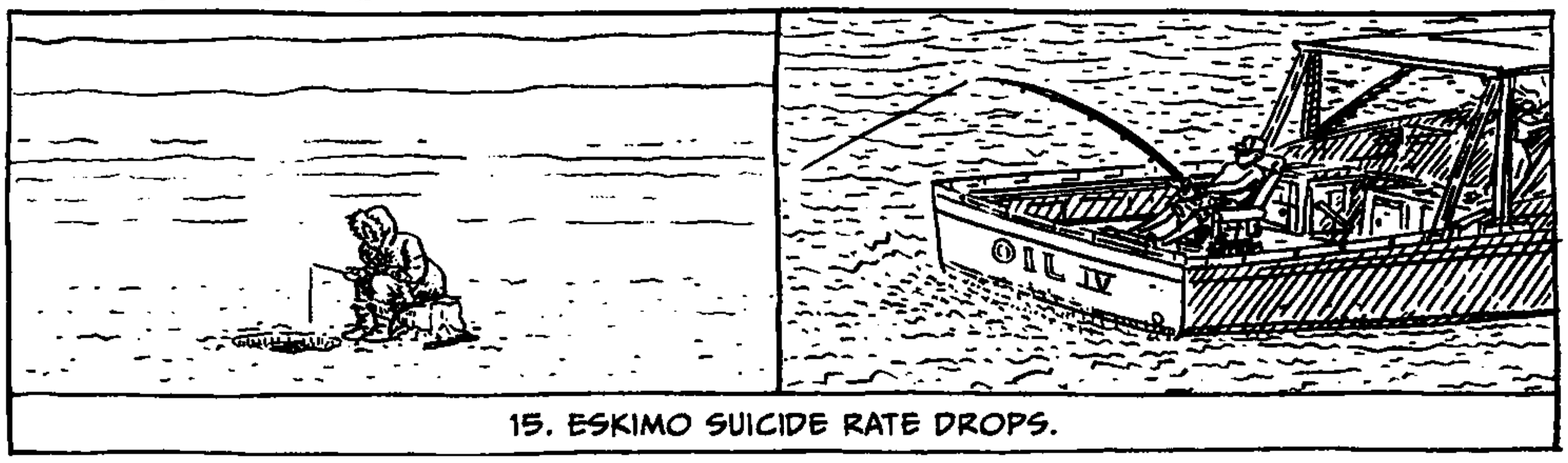
Sun King caught out

Sir,

Hackwatch (1190) is surprised that some of the coverage in the Sun newspaper of the recent troubles at the BBC was sympathetic. Here you cite the paper's business editor, Ian King. However, you don't mention that King occasionally presents a programme on BBC Radio 5 Live, "Wake Up to Money".

Yours faithfully,
DR ALEX MAY,

Manchester.



SOLUTIONS

"Kensite Services Ltd: the fullest range of Welfare Solutions" – *portaloos*

"Foot Solutions: Designed to help you take care of your feet" – *shoes*

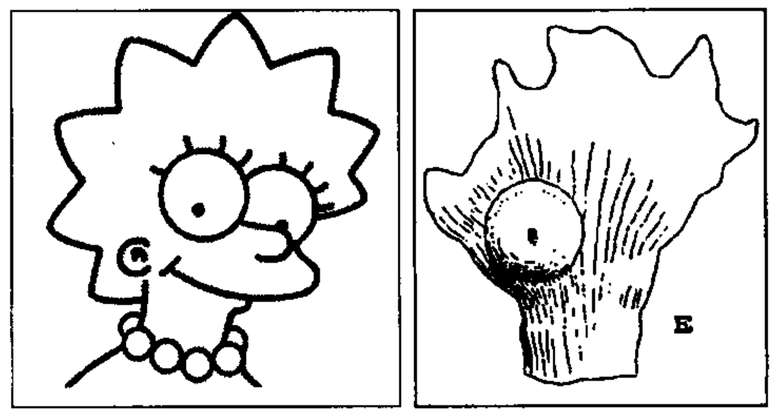
"Luminus Devices: high performance, solid state lighting solutions" – *LEDs*

"Shannon Luminous Solutions Ltd: Your luminous solution provider" – *fluorescent paint*

"Sparkling Solutions: reliable home cleaning for busy people" – *cleaners*

All submitted by readers

Lookalike



Seaweed **Lisa**

Sir,

Many of your readers will, no doubt, have spotted the uncanny resemblance between a cystocarpic plant of Erythroglossum sandrianum, from Lily Newton's 1931 "Handbook of the British Seaweeds", and Lisa Simpson.

Only their mothers could tell 'em apart.

Yours,
ROBIN SOMES,

Via email.

Crack in the argument

Sir,

Michael Charalambous (letters no. 1190) may be a "rock dad" but perhaps he's a little out of touch in his knowledge of rock star addictions. Self-styled bohemian Pete Doherty's drug of choice is actually crack cocaine, not heroin as Mr Charalambous states. His band's song "Pipedown" makes reference to the habit. Consequently, your book reviewer's description of him as taking a "pharmaceutical route" to stardom is accurate enough. As any real rocker knows, heroin is like so 90s, man.

Yours faithfully,
DAN STEWART,

Via email.

Sir,

*Michael Charalambous (Letters, Eye 1190) appears to believe that heroin is not obtained through any pharmaceutical process. In fact, it is obtained by the acetylation of morphine with acetic acid to form 3,6-diacetylmorphine, a.k.a. diamorphine, a.k.a. heroin; and, if you ask me, that is a pharmaceutical process! It is *morphine* that is extracted from poppies – not heroin – but, in any case, extraction of an active compound from a naturally occurring substance is just as "pharmaceutical" as any other chemical process involved in the manufacturing of drugs.*

DR. DAVID GIBSON,

Leeds.

"Your Honour, if it pleases the court, I'd like to take everyone to the park and buy them an ice cream"

Offensive boob-oo

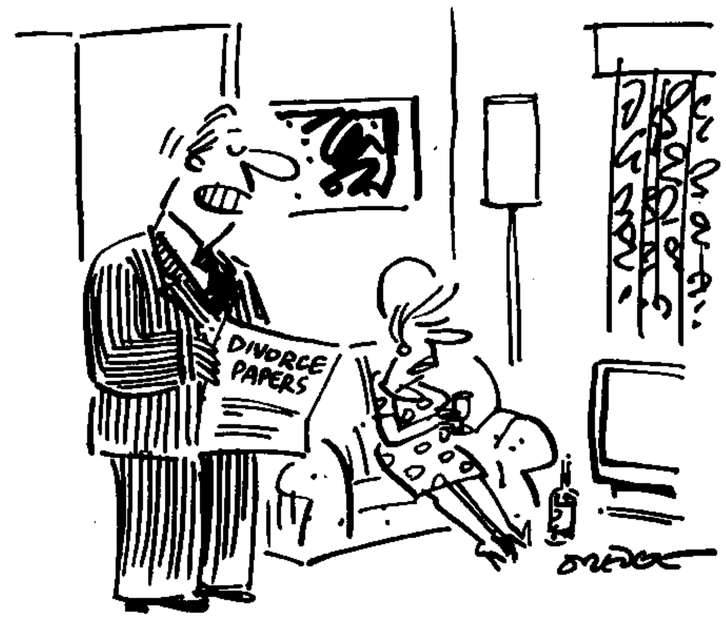
Sir,

Huge fan of Private Eye all my life – however I was upset for the first time over the cartoon of a Muslim woman in hijab breastfeeding men. It's disgusting and extremely insulting and wasn't necessary to illustrate. My wife is a hijabi. The whole point of the hijab is to cover a woman's sexuality. Really it isn't sensitive to your Muslim readers, which I count as one of them. Please don't do it again,

Thanks.

Regards,
JAKE PURCHES,

Worthing.



"I've got something that'll spice up our sex life, darling..."

Treating ME better?

Sir,

Your piece on "ME for kids" was not quite the ticket. Yes, ME causes more long-term sickness absence from school than any other illness, even cancer and leukaemia; I am one of the authors of the study that established this in 1997. And yes, it certainly is triggered by a virus – I should know, having been dramatically struck down by it, for years confined to my bed and then to a wheelchair, due to a virus related to poliomyelitis.

But to report that the children and young people seen by Dr Esther Crawley "achieve full recovery 90% of the time", when paediatricians see no-one after the age of 18 at the outside, must surely be inaccurate. Sadly, many young people are not recovered by then, even though symptoms may abate. They are seldom cautioned that the illness can flare up again; believing themselves to be totally "better", many relapse through over-exertion, and have to leave work or university. Some become as ill as they were before and have to start from square one.

I run the longest established service for children and young people with ME in the UK. Families with severely ill children tell us they are made worse by the increases in effort that the rehabilitation programmes you describe demand. Some allege they have been told that if the programme does not work, their child may be re-diagnosed as psychiatrically ill. Perhaps because of this, some report keeping their paediatrician happy by saying they are following the programme when they are not – they are pacing the child. Then when the child improves, the paediatrician thinks the programme is successful and their use of it is therefore reinforced.

Anyone who suffers from classic ME is made worse by effort. That is a feature of the illness and is part of the diagnosis. When ME was "collected" under the umbrella of chronic fatigue syndrome, its true neurological nature was hidden. Those who can withstand programmes involving progressive increases in effort either do not have classic ME or are substantially recovered already. Until ME is removed from the CFS umbrella, or isolated as a subgroup within it, medical muddle will continue.

JANE COLBY,

Executive Director, The Young ME Sufferers Trust.

Sexual politics

Sir,

Please see enclosed photograph from my local Supermarket.

Is the placing of your impressive organ in such a well-stacked rack for any of the following reasons?

1. By making the magazine difficult to find, is this a ploy to increase subscription?

2. An indication that the content and nipple count is soon to undertake a slightly different editorial approach?

3. An obscure anti-feminist statement?

Yours faithfully,
IAN JOHNSTON,

Manchester.

Binchy comment

Sir,

Following the scepticism about the merits of Haruki Murakami (Bookworm 1188, Letters 1190), I feel moved to write in his defence.

Eric Dickens's notion that Murakami is a "sicko", "a bit pervy", and deserving of the epithet "Mucky-Rami" is unfair. All serious writers are concerned with the limits of human experience, of which sexual experience is an important part. Exploring its extremes is a valid – though admittedly, not a necessary – part of their craft. Quite apart from which, Murakami's descriptions of sex tend to be relatively non-contrived and matter-of-fact. (If Dickens thinks Murakami is a bit "mucky", his experience of modern fiction is probably limited. I recommend he sample Ian McEwan's "First Love", "Last Rites" and Martin Amis's "Yellow Dog". Which isn't to say there's anything wrong with McEwan or Amis, either.)

I like Murakami partly because his prose is clear and unpretentious. His narratives are strong and engaging, and usually end satisfyingly, whereas a lot of other novelists fall down badly in the final third. Finally, his characters are unusual and intelligent without being ponderous or pontifical. I would agree with Bookworm that he's not very deep, but then, I'm not claiming he's Thomas Hardy. On the other hand, he's no Maeve Binchy, either.

Yours faithfully,
JAMES WARD,

Wadhurst, E. Sussex.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"I need to pull a rabbit out of the fire, here"
JOHN FRANCOMBE, Channel 4 Racing
(Alba Siletti)

"Those pots will literally be going under the hammer in a few moments"
PAUL MARTIN, BBC Flog It!
(Harry Burt)

"Tell me about it because you certainly came out with all guns flying!"
DAMIEN JOHNSON
(Christopher Horner)

"I didn't have any superstitions but I always got in the right side of the car, because I thought it brought me luck"
MARK BLUNDELL
(Richard Durie)

"I'm not Lewis, but if I were me, I would be furious"
DAMON HILL
(Christian Smith)

Fact filed

Sir,

You claim in Street of Shame that an article in the Guardian about Russian billionaires had been lifted from "The eXile". Anyone who read a rather overhyped and overrated book called "World on Fire" by Amy Chua, published three years ago or so, will recognise that all the quoted common material was given in that book, although I don't know if Chua claimed to be the first to notice these rather obvious facts. So it could be Harding was just doing his job of reading books so Guardian readers don't have to. Certainly saved you the trouble.

Regards,
JOHN WILSON,

London NW3.

SUPERMODELS 2

KERBER

PARIS HILTON LAUNCHING FOOTWEAR RANGE!
WE COULD EVEN CREATE A RANGE OF SPECIAL TRAINERS FOR ALL MY FANS!!!
AIR SOLES?
YES THEY ARE!!!
WE ♥ PARIS

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "This certainly is a new one to us," Police Sergeant Cate Welsh told a court in Guelph, Ontario, "and it's hard to imagine what motivated him. We know that Mr Loft has approached at least six women in public places, and begged them to kick him in the groin, and that several of the women have obliged him. I imagine it would be quite painful, but he didn't make a peep, he just stood up and went on his way. But why? It's very strange."

Summarising evidence after the arrest of twenty-seven-year-old Jarrett Loft on six charges of mischief, Assistant Crown attorney Marilyn Dolby told the court that "the first incident occurred on April 7th, when he approached a woman in Riverside Park and said 'excuse me, can I ask you something? I don't wish to cause offence, but will you please kick me in the balls?' On May 22nd, he approached another women in the same park and said 'Please help me. I have a chemical imbalance in my brain and my doctor told me that the only way to fix it is for someone to kick me in the balls.' A week later, he made a similar request to a woman jogger, who felt she had no choice, so she kicked him four times in the groin. And last Tuesday, he approached three further women, all of whom kicked him repeatedly. Afterwards, he thanked them and left on his bicycle."

Loft was released on $3,000 bail, pending trial. None of the women were harmed. *(Guelph Mercury, 31/5/07. Spotter: Jim Atkinson)*

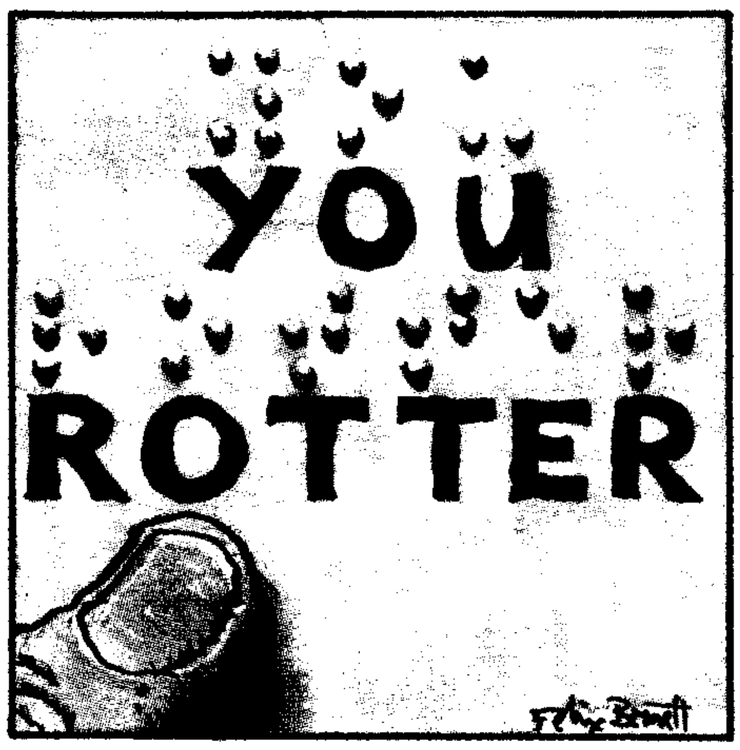
– ● –

● *"Free Enterprise in China is being stifled by bureaucracy," Li Jie of the Lunar Village Science and Technology company told reporters after losing his appeal in a Beijing courtroom. "Last year, my company bottled air from German stadiums that would be hosting World Cup matches, and we'd planned to sell it to fans who were unable to travel. My idea was that they could hang a plastic bag full of the air around their necks, and breathe in while watching the matches on television, but our application for a licence to 'sell air from a special place' at 50 yuan a bagful was turned down by the authorities. They did the same thing to us in 2005, when I wanted to sell land on the moon at 298 yuan an acre."*

Li's plan was rejected by the Beijing Administration for Industry and Commerce, the Haidan District Court, the Chaoyang District People's Court, and the Beijing Second Intermediate People's Court, who ruled that "air is too vague and unstable a concept to be covered by commercial classifications." (Xinhua News Agency, 20/6/07. Spotter: Philip West)

– ● –

"There are thousands of legitimately disabled people throughout Scotland, but the Tayside Blind Golf Society is clearly abusing the goodwill of others," an anonymous letter writer told the Dundee Courier. "On a recent visit to



their course, I observed several 'blind' golfers tee off with little or no assistance, then watch their own shots approach the green, and even fill in scorecards. One particular gentleman pointed up the fairway towards a green and asked 'is that the flag?' even though it was 200 yards away, and barely visible against the trees. Worse still, I saw any number of 'blind' players putting on the green without assistance, then picking their own ball out of the cup, while in the clubhouse, people were walking around unaided and going up and down stairs with ease. I am employed in the voluntary sector, so am aware of most disabilities, and it was obvious that the majority of these 'blind' people were sighted."

However George Derby, the Captain of the Tayside Blind Golf Society, described the claims as "a load of rubbish. All our members are registered blind, and there are various levels of blindness, ranging from B1 to B4."

The upper limit for the B4 category is the ability to read the top three lines of an optician's chart at a distance of six metres. *(Dundee Courier, 22/0/07. Spotter: Moray Newlands)*

GLENDA SLAGG

FLEET STREET'S FISH WIFE!!!

■ CHRIS TARRANT??!? Who Wants To Bed A Millionaire??!?? (Geddit?!!?) Not me, mister, when he comes home stinking of fish and needs a bucket of Viagra to get started!!???! Poor old Ingrid – that's Mrs Tarrant that was, stoopid – no wonder she decided to phone a lawyer and take the money!!??? Geddit??!?? She *didn't* geddit very often 'cos her two-timing' hubby was too busy a-jumpin' and a-humpin' anything in a skirt!!???

■ INGRID TARRANT – arent-chasickofher!?!? OK, so your hubby comes home stinking of fish and needs a bucket of Viagra to get started!???! Who wouldn't if they were married to an old ratbag like you???!? Let's face it, darling, you wanted to be a millionaire, but you couldn't answer the simplest question, ie where was your hubby last night??? Phone a friend??!? You haven't got any, love, that's why you phoned up the Daily Mail instead!!!?!

■ AMY WINEHOUSE??!? Dontchaluvher???!? She's the female Pete Doherty who has cheered us through the dark days of summer by getting stoned and legless and not turning up for her own concerts!!?! Good on yer, Amy – don't let them spoil the fun by sending you to Rehab!!?! Geddit???!? You just go down the Wine House and get good and pissed!!??!

■ AMY WINEHOUSE!!?! What a disgrace!!! What kind of role model does she make for Britain's kids, a-boozin' and a-floozin' all over the papers as if she was Pete Doherty in a dress??!? Take a tip from Auntie Glenda – get yourself down to Rehab (Geddit??!) before you end up in the Mad House!??! Geddit???!??

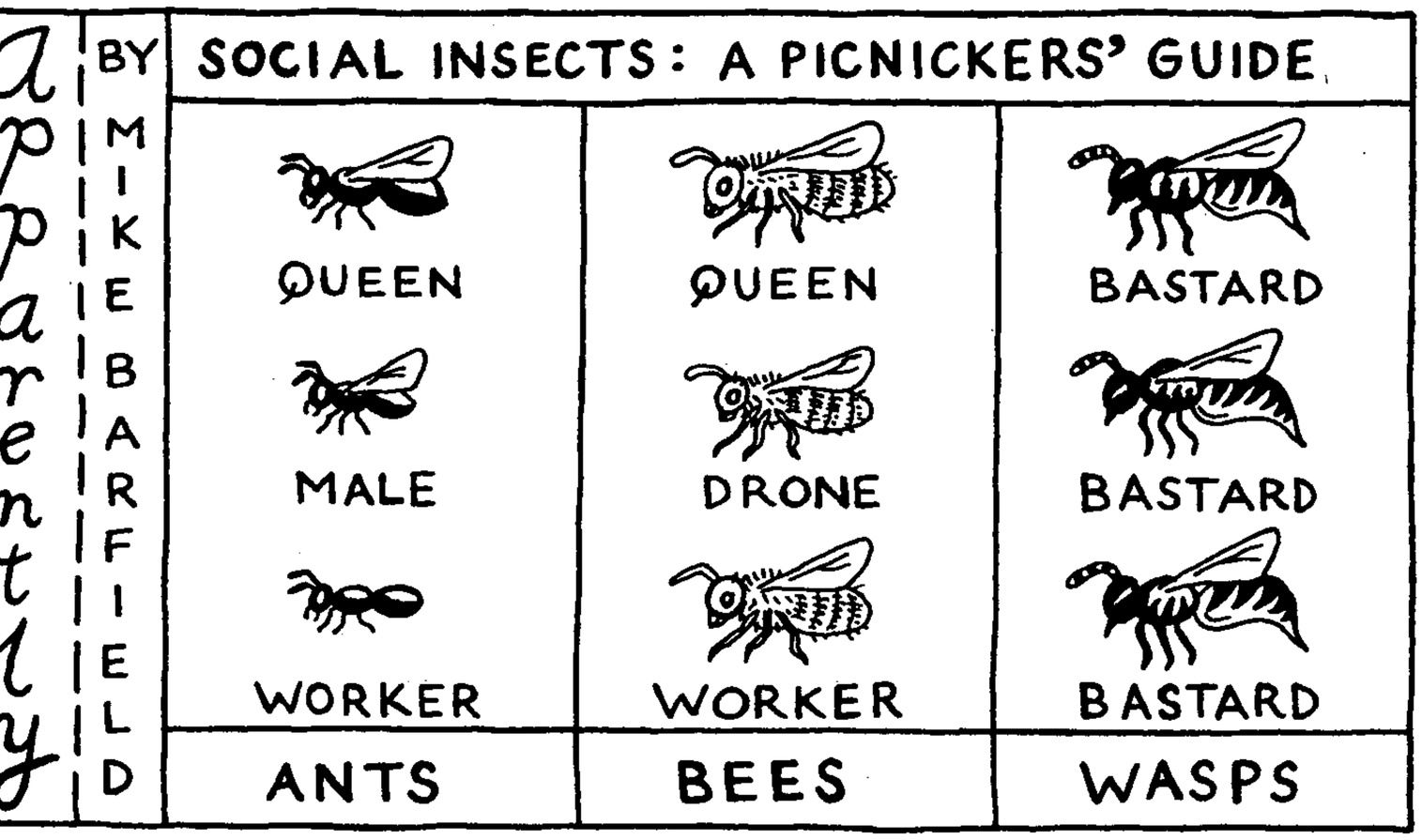
■ HERE they are – Glenda's New Season Soccer Sizzlers:

● Sven Goran-Eriksson – ok, so your team scored!?! Now it's your turn, big boy, and it's an open gal!? Geddit???

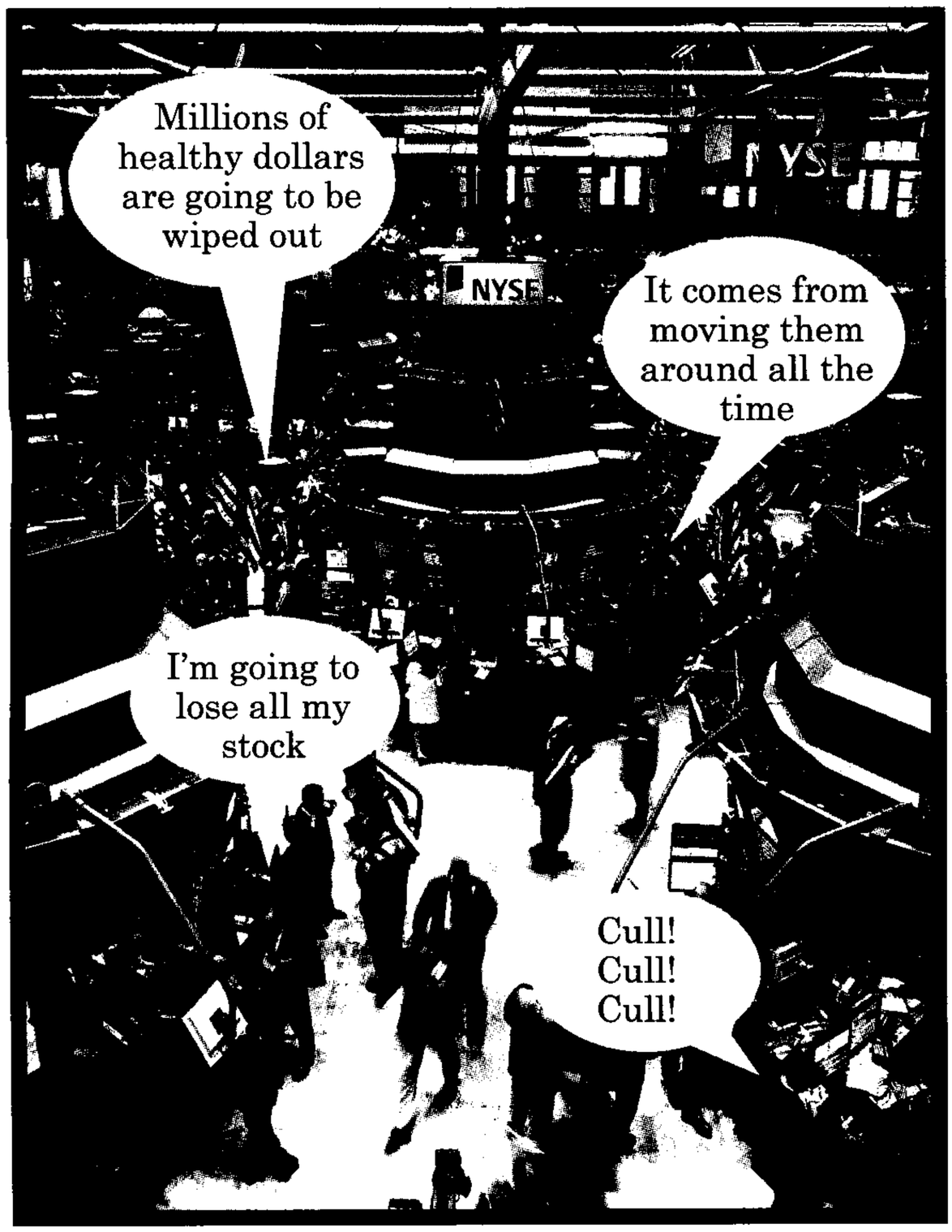
● Wayne Rooney – Thank Gawd it's only your toe that's broken, Spuddie!! Here's one granny who's glad to hear it!??! Geddit???!?

● Alan Curbishley – He's the Hammers Boss – ok, so it looks like your team are going down!!? Well, now it's your turn, big boy *(You've done this, you're fired. Ed.)*

Byeeee!!!



FOOTSIE AND MOUTH DISEASE


Millions of healthy dollars are going to be wiped out
It comes from moving them around all the time
I'm going to lose all my stock
Cull! Cull! Cull!
NYSE

Why the markets are in turmoil

Our Economics Editor explains

By D.O.W Jones

The recent fall in the equity markets was sparked by a crisis of confidence in the American sub-prime mortgage sector which exposed a number of hedge fund and private equity leveraged consolidated debt deals to pressure from er...er...er. **Full story page 94**

Your questions answered

Q Will house prices go up?

A In the short term, it looks unlikely with a correction to the property market caused by interest rate level fluctuations, but in the long term this may herald a flight from equities back into property which would er...er...certainly do something or other...

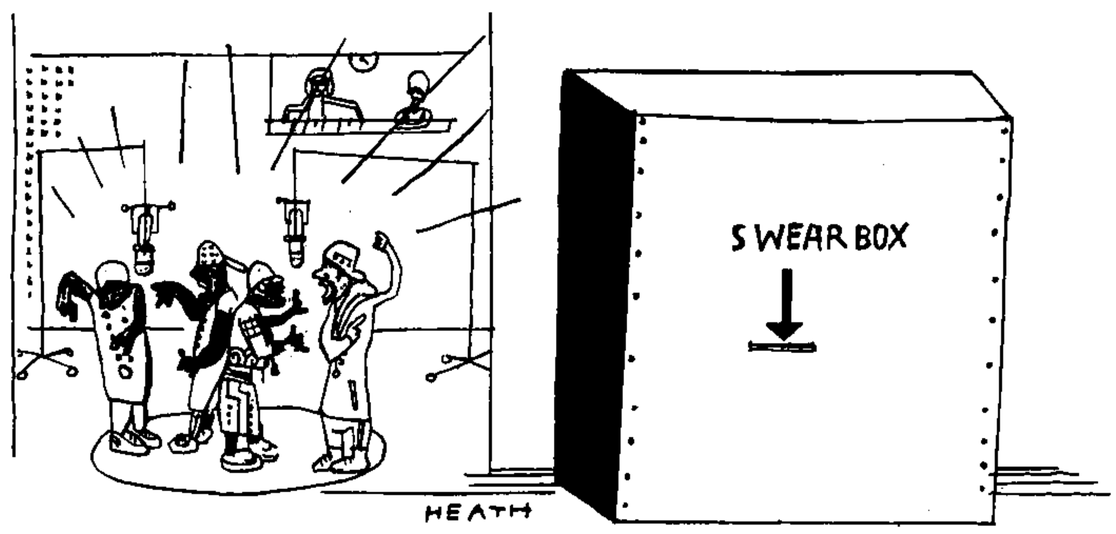
Q Will my pension be affected?

A Yes and no. Dealers are now looking to Japan where any movement in government bonds geared to mortgage debt reassessment could well trigger a run on grapefruit segments (*is this right, Ed?*)

Q Do you *really* understand this?

A No. No-one does.

RAP RECORDING STUDIO



The Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book

No. 94 A memorial service to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the death of a much-loved Princess

The Archbishop of Canterbury *(for it is he)*: Your Majesty, Lord Spencer, Mr Fayed, ladies and gentlemen. We are gathered together, at least those of us who have been invited, to commemorate the life of the late Princess of Wales.

Congregation: She was the People's Princess.

Mr Fugger *(from the pews)*: What about my fuggin' son?

The President: I was just coming to that bit. We also remember at this time all the other ones who weren't so famous but whose lives were so tragically cut short by this terrible accident.

Mr Fugger: It was fuggin' murder! The Duke of Edinburgh did it!

(The Duke of Edinburgh will remain seated or he may kneel)

Congregation: Shadd-up-your-face, Fugger, and siddown!!

(There will then follow an address by Earl Spencer)

Spencer: Whilst it has never been proved that the Duke of Edinburgh murdered my sister, it is the sort of thing he would have done, given half a chance. Bloody Windsors! In the meantime, I would like to remind you that the Althorp Diana experience is open throughout the summer at the very modest price of £50 per head – regrettably, there are no concessions, but visitors will be given a personal tour by myself and my delightful new partner. Amen.

Prince Harry: Where do you get a drink round here?

Prince William: Yah.

(There shall then follow a piece of popular music rendered by Sir Elton of John or it may be Sir George Michael of Wham)

Prayers

(Prayers will then be led by the Prince of Wales. The congregation will make the response "It really is appalling" at the appropriate juncture)

Charles: Dear God, you know, this whole death thingie is just, you know, so upsetting for all of us and ten years is a jolly long time and the press go on and on about it as though it was yesterday, it's pretty hard on Camilla who's made a good fist of it really. I mean, when you think about it...

All: It really is appalling.

Charles: So I think the best thing for everyone really is to put the whole thingie behind us and move on. Amen.

(The congregation will then sing the traditional hymn composed by St Gerald and the Pacemakers)

Move on! Move on!
With hope in your hearts
And you'll never think about Di again!
You'll never think about her again.

(Flowers wrapped in cellophane will then be placed on the altar by representatives of all faiths as the congregation leaves to be photographed by waiting paparazzi.

The organ will play Bach's Toccata and Fugoff)

© The Church of England 2007.

PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 2

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader

Comrades,

As you will have observed, our country has in recent days been threatened by a series of potential disasters, each of which I have personally managed to overcome by my firm and decisive intervention.

This is in marked contrast to the ineffectual strategies adopted by the discredited regime of our former leader, with his dangerous cult of personality and obsessive pursuit of favourable coverage by the media.

In the new Age of Change, which is identified with my regime, all that has changed:

1. No sooner had large parts of the country become submerged by extensive flooding than I stepped in to appear on television and have my photograph taken in prudent protective clothing appropriate to the conditions, ie a dark suit, blue tie and wellington boots. Within days of my intervention, the floodwaters receded, the sun came out and the crisis was averted.

2. For too long our country has suffered from the pursuit of slavish compliance with the wishes of the capitalist hegemony headed by President Dubya Bush.

Again, I dealt with this crisis by firm and decisive intervention, namely by flying to the United States to confront the hated Bush in person, wearing prudent protective clothing appropriate to the conditions, ie a dark suit, blue tie and a permanent scowl on my face. Compare this with the frivolous posturings of the former leader, with his tight jeans, open-necked shirt and permanent fawning grin, bringing discredit on our great party and nation.

As the television footage beamed around the world clearly demonstrated, in the Age of Change there is no room for running poodles of neo-con imperialism.

3. You will observe that, unlike the former leader, when I go on holiday I go to Britain, to our glorious beaches, our flooded countryside and our unclosed footpaths.

Not for me the debauched fleshpots of the foreign villas owned by tax evaders and decadent popular singers. Nor do I curry favour with corrupt politicians who think that by letting people stay in their castles and handing out free watches they can hope to influence the policies of this party which in the Age of Change must now remain above all suspicion.

4. You will also note that no sooner did a new crisis arise, namely the outbreak of plague among the honest, hard-working cattle toiling in our fields to provide us with much-needed protein for the nation's balanced diet in the Age of Change, than I broke off my British holiday to take personal charge of the crisis.

We are all aware of what happened when a similar incident arose under the regime of the discredited former leader Comrade Blair, when millions of innocent cattle, sheep and pigs were ruthlessly exterminated in a series of purges which shocked the civilised world.

In those dark days under my predecessor, the life of our British country was brought to a halt, footpaths were closed and children were rationed to only six beefburgers every meal.

On this occasion, however, I had no sooner been photographed on a farm wearing prudent clothing appropriate to the conditions, ie a dark suit, blue tie, green wellingtons and a gas mask, than, thanks to my firm and decisive intervention, the crisis was over.

All this has demonstrated how very different is the style of leadership which now prevails in the Age of Change.

We can now resume our ceaseless preparation for the next Great Leap Forward to an even more prosperous and efficient Britain which will be outlined in my Five-Year Plan, the full details of which will be announced in a series of further decrees – as soon as I have sorted out the latest crisis in international bourgeois capitalism.

Gordon Brown

Agreed and ratified by the Leader, still without any need for a referendum.

A picture of last year's supreme party conference for your scrapbooks, showing the leader delivering his Five Year speech on the Age of Change

Fraternal Greetings to the Leader from Chairman Murdoch of the News International Co-operative

Comrade Murdoch salutes the inspired leadership of Comrade Brown and pledges full support for his Age of Change.

He furthermore offers his fraternal contempt for the effete Old Etonian running dog Cameron and his pitiful revisionist claque of backsliders and moral imbeciles, including the hated Boris Johnson and the long-discredited doctrines of Hagueist Duncan-Coughism.

THAT HOUSE OF LORDS COMMITTEE INTERNET WARNINGS IN FULL

1. Repeatedly typing in 'goople' is a complete waste of time.

2. The man on the other end of the help-line in India gets very stroppy after the eighth time that you've failed to find the on button on the front of the computer.

3. You do not win a million dollars if you click those pictures that pop up from nowhere. You just get more pop-up pictures.

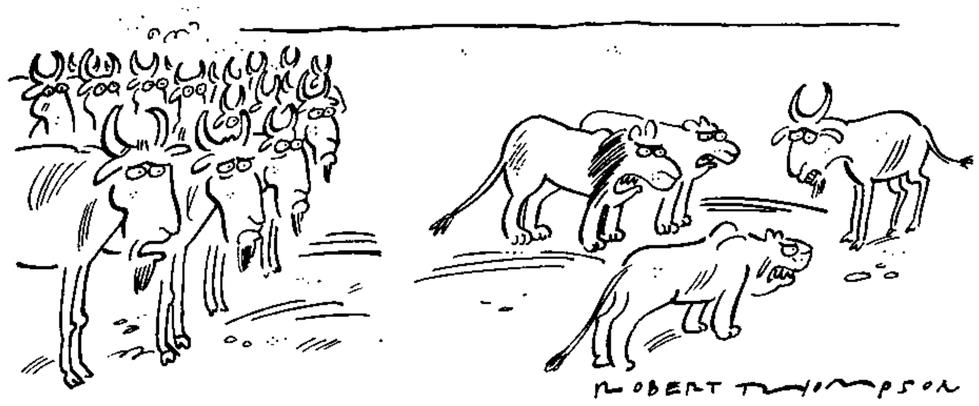
4. If you repeatedly type 'hot-males' into your search engine you do not see that email from your children on holiday in Australia, but you do get very funny looks from your wife when she next uses the bloody thing.

NEW-LOOK FERGIE

The Duchess of York's Breathtaking Recent Makeover

HAS BLAIR PHOTO BEEN TOUCHED UP?

© American Vogue 2007



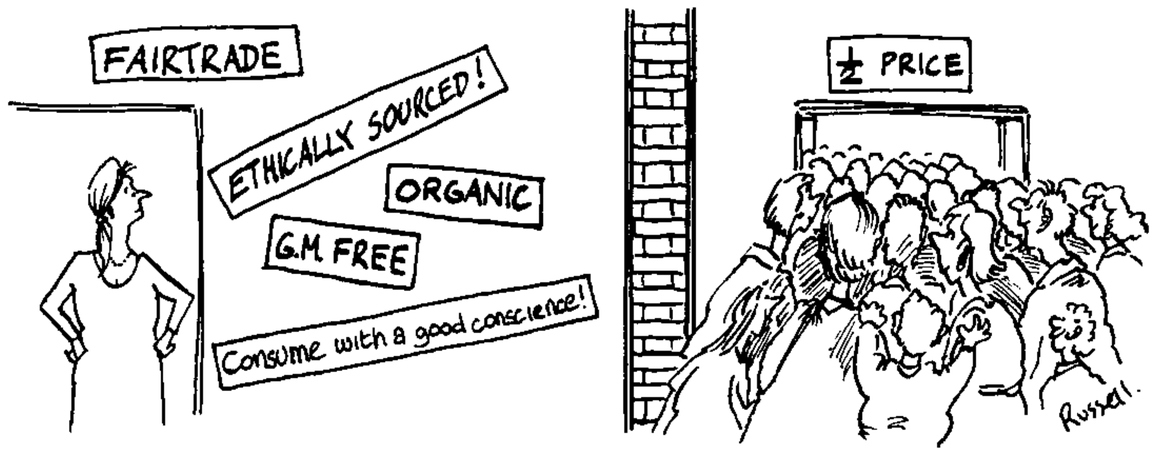
"If you haven't got the protection of a gang these days, you've had it"

FOOT AND MOUTH LATEST

CHEAP TOP SHOP CLOTHES PRODUCED BY SLAVE LABOUR

On other pages:

- Pope produced by Catholic Church.
- Shit produced by bears in wood.



That Controversial Times TV Ad

Voiceover: The Times – it's so bad you wouldn't even wipe your arse with it

Should this advertisement be banned? Or should the Times be allowed to tell people how bad it is?
Let us know on Timesarsewipe.co.uk

LATEST EMBARRASSING TARRANT REVELATIONS

CAMERON UNVEILS DARING NEW TREE POLICY

by Our Political Correspondent **Matthew D'Arshola**

THE Tory leader David Cameron today launched the policy which he hopes will take him to the top of the polls at the next election.

Out goes the hated 'green tree logo' which has lost the Conservative Party millions of supporters in recent years.

Yew Turn

In comes Cameron's new-look 'blue tree logo', which Party strategists are confident will win the Tories millions of votes, particularly among ethnic minorities, young people and blue tree lovers.

Old look

New look

Announcing the change, Mr Cameron said, "There are bound to be people who don't like change and will resent our new blue tree.

"But I am determined to move the party forward, and I am convinced that blue is the new green. Not of course that we aren't still green, because we are, but we are definitely not Brown!"

STORM GROWS OVER 'DYING MAN' FILM

by Our TV Correspondent **Al Zheimer**

THERE has been a sensational new twist to the row over recent TV footage claiming to show the last hours of a man suffering from terminal megalomania.

Viewers saw the man, described only as "Tony", formerly a clever and talented professional, decline into a twilight state of paranoid delusions and voices telling him to invade Iraq.

The film appeared to show that Tony's life had ended and that he had passed away, much to the relief of everyone in the country.

However, it has now come to light that Tony did not "die" at all, but was found weeks later wandering round the Middle East, claiming that he had been sent by "higher powers" to bring peace on earth.

● Do you find this article offensive? Or do you think it has been dishonestly edited to make the former prime minister look like an idiot? We'd really like to hear from you, particularly as we are all going on holiday and we are desperately short of material to fill up our newspaper. Anything you can offer on this or any other subject would be gratefully received and published in full. Send your contribution to www.sillyseason.telegraphtrash.co.uk

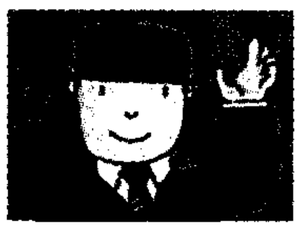
GOVERNMENT STRATEGY FOR OUTBREAK OF LEGIONNAIRES DISEASE IN FULL

Immediate culling of all Legionnaires.

Er...

That's it.

Children's TV



Mr Benn

THE animated adventures of an Environment Secretary who puts on a costume and steps through the door into a different fantastical world each week.

Last week, Mr Benn donned flippers and a snorkel for a visit to the strange undersea world of Berkshire. This week he travels to a farm in Surrey where he puts on clean wellies and a full protective suit.

Eye Rating: *Bullish*

To The Editor of Ants and Antmen

Dear Sir,

In answer to all those readers who have been troubled by a plague of unwanted Daily Telegraphs, may I recommend the solution urged by my late grandfather.

Whenever he came across an unwanted copy of the newspaper in question, he poured boiling water all over it. That soon solved the problem!

Minnie Arkwright
Heckmondwyke

Dear Sir,

In our family we stopped the Daily Telegraph getting into our house by putting Sellotape over the letterbox. A cheap and highly effective answer to the problem!

The Duke of Westminster
Cheshire

Dear Sir,

I am sorry to confess after 60 years that when at my prep school we were confronted with an infestation of Daily Telegraphs, we used a magnifying glass to concentrate the rays of the sun on the unfortunate newspaper until it burst into flames. It may sound cruel but it certainly sorted out the problem!

Peregrine Worsthorne
Basildon

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Ingmar Bergman and Michelangelo Antonioni

So. Farewell
Then two of the greatest
Film Directors the world
Has ever known.

One Swedish, one
Italian.
The Seventh Seal,
That was
Your hit film,
Ingmar.

Blow-Up. That was
Yours,
Michelangelo.

Amazingly, you both died
Within hours of
Each other.

For Bergman it was a victory
For Death
In the chess game of
Life.

As for Antonioni,
It was too.

E.J. Thribb
(The 17½th Seal)

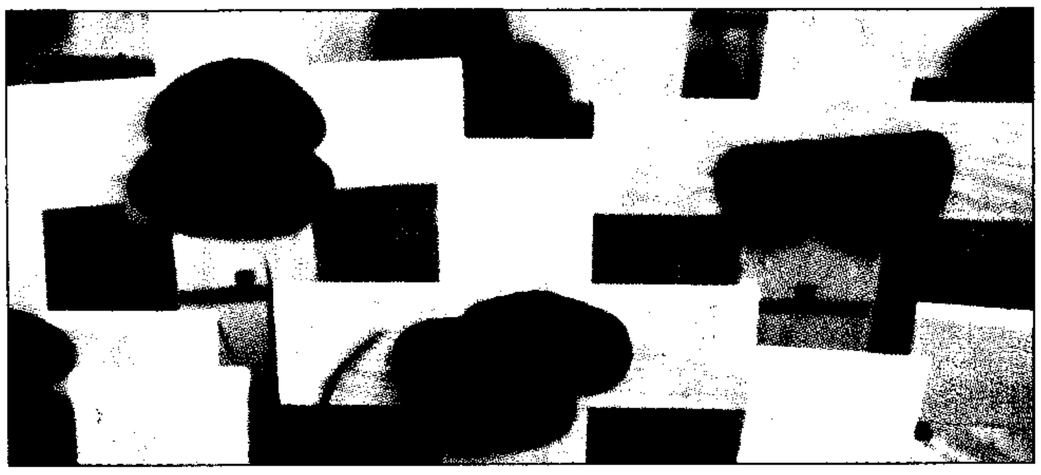
■ E.J. Thribb is appearing at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe at the Donald Dewar Memorial Hall (Venue No. 3,038, 11.15pm-11.30, not Mondays, Wednesdays or Fridays). He will be reading from his collection *'A Threnody for Diana, the Late Princess of Wales and Other Poems'*.

That Honorary Degree Citation In Full

SALUTAMUS SHILPAM SHETTIAM PULCHERRIMAM STELLAM INDIAM BOLLYWOODENSIS MULTITALENTA CANTANDO ET THESPIANO TERPSICHOROQUE SED FAMOSISSIMA IN "FRATRIS MAGNI" TELEVISIONIE REALITATE IN CANALE IV, VICTIMA GROTESQUE ABUSUS RACISTUS PER EXEMPLO 'POPPADUM' VOCATUM AUT 'PAKI' ETCETERA PER HIDEOSA ET GROSSA SLAGGA JADUM BONUM PROVOCAVIT IMMENSUM SCANDALUM GLOBALENSIS SED FELICITER FINALITER SHILPAM TRIUMPHAVIT IN DOMO "FRATIS MAGNI" GRATIA AD VOTO PUBLICO TELEPHONICO (RATUS PREMIUS AD XC DENARII PER MINUTEM) GAUDEAMUS IGITUR .

© UNIVERSITATEM METROPOLITATEM LEEDSIS 2007 (quondam Polytechnicus Ilkley Moor)

Record Poppy Crop In Afghanistan*



*and Iraq

Exclusive to all British newspapers

'WHY WON'T THESE JOURNALISTS LEAVE MADDY'S PARENTS ALONE?'

by Our Man Keeping The Story Going **Al Garve**

THE tearful, lined faces tell their own story. The agony is etched in every feature. And the final twist of the knife for the tortured parents of little Maddy has been the outrageous behaviour of the Portuguese press.

For weeks, these irresponsible and callous so-called journalists have been indulging in a daily orgy of speculation without a shred of evidence to support their poisonous guesswork.

No story is too wild for these heartless hacks to repeat ad nauseam, no theory too ridiculous for them to splash over their front pages.

They have even now pointed their malodorous fingers at the McCann parents themselves, incredibly suggesting that they themselves might have been involved in the little girl's disappeareance or, heaven forbid, her death.

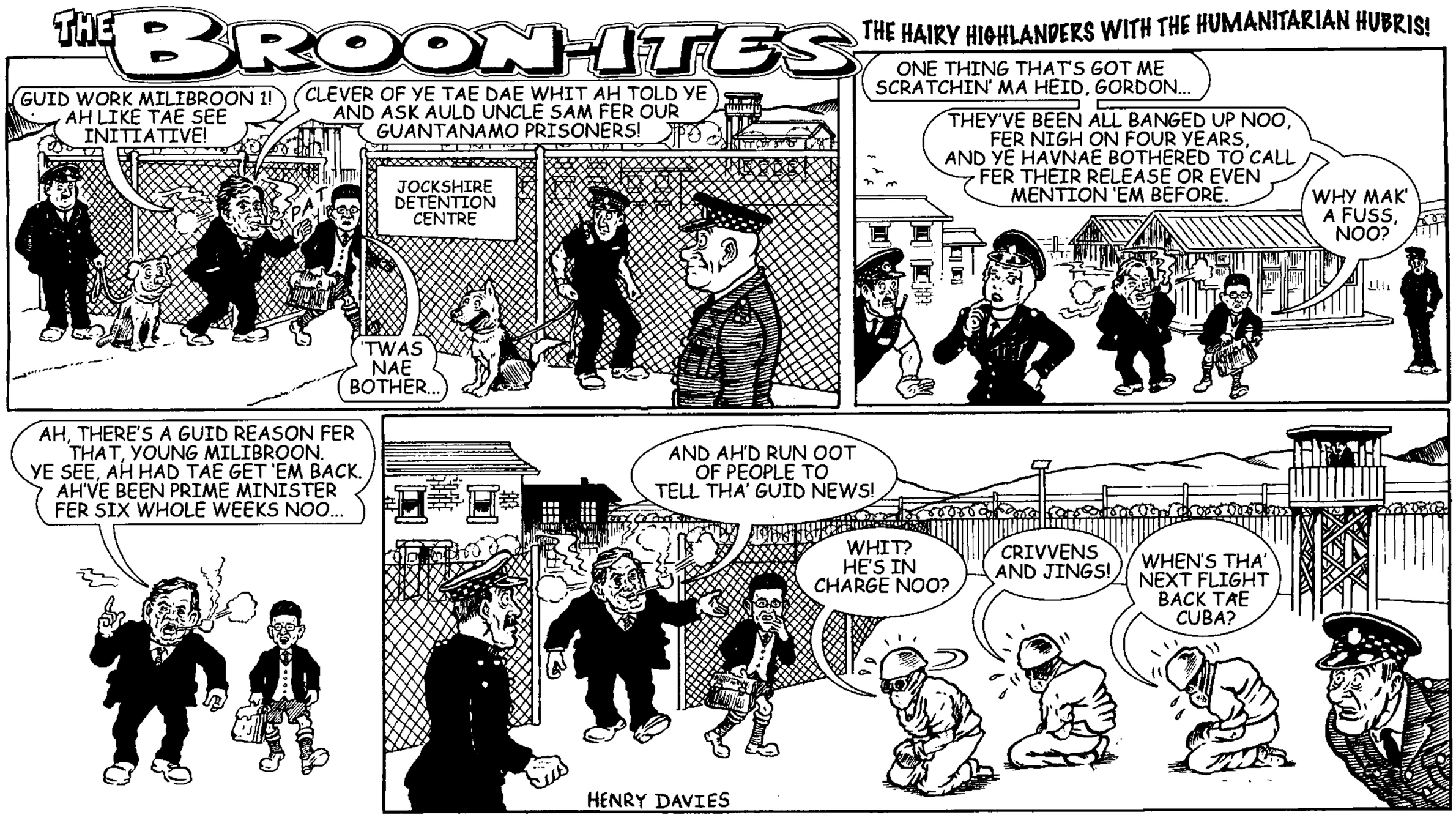
How dare these vile foreign muck-rakers continue to peddle their endless obsessive stream of innuendoes and filth in a desperate bid to promote the circulation of their revolting apologies for newspapers.

Don't they realise that that is our job?

On Other Pages

● Is Maddie story still alive? Fears grow **2-94**

PLUS Free poster featuring a picture of Maddy, carrying the urgent message 'Read the Sun/Express/Mail/Independent' (or any other paper of your choice).


THE BROON-ITES
GUID WORK MILIBROON 1! AH LIKE TAE SEE INITIATIVE!
CLEVER OF YE TAE DAE WHIT AH TOLD YE AND ASK AULD UNCLE SAM FER OUR GUANTANAMO PRISONERS!
JOCKSHIRE DETENTION CENTRE
'TWAS NAE BOTHER...
THE HAIRY HIGHLANDERS WITH THE HUMANITARIAN HUBRIS!
ONE THING THAT'S GOT ME SCRATCHIN' MA HEID, GORDON...
THEY'VE BEEN ALL BANGED UP NOO, FER NIGH ON FOUR YEARS, AND YE HAVNAE BOTHERED TO CALL FER THEIR RELEASE OR EVEN MENTION 'EM BEFORE.
WHY MAK' A FUSS, NOO?
AH, THERE'S A GUID REASON FER THAT, YOUNG MILIBROON. YE SEE, AH HAD TAE GET 'EM BACK. AH'VE BEEN PRIME MINISTER FER SIX WHOLE WEEKS NOO...
AND AH'D RUN OOT OF PEOPLE TO TELL THA' GUID NEWS!
WHIT? HE'S IN CHARGE NOO?
CRIVVENS AND JINGS!
WHEN'S THA' NEXT FLIGHT BACK TAE CUBA?
HENRY DAVIES

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL PAPERS

GREAT WHITE SPACE SPOTTED

by Our August Staff Phil Space

A HUGE white space was seen last night in the middle of our newspaper to the horror of the editor and the shocked staff.

The space, which was at least 9 inches long and over 6 inches wide was believed to be floating about where sensible news items are normally put.

Luckily at the last minute emergency journalists filled the space with ridiculous items about non-existent sharks and the discovery of Lord Lucan for the 100th time.

A relieved editor told readers, "Thank goodness for complete rubbish. Without it that great white space could have been very dangerous – if not lethal."

IS WORLD'S OLDEST DOLPHIN EXTINCT?

by Our Lib dem Staff **Lunchtime Opec**

CHINESE scientists are becoming increasingly worried at the possible disappearance of their country's oldest-known marine creature, the Ming Dolphin.

Since this ancient mammal was chosen to head the Lib Dem Party, it has never been seen again, and many scientists believe it to be dead, killed off by an outbreak of deadly gerontophobia.

But other experts claim to have seen the Ming in recent months on more than one occasion.

Said Nick Clegg, a Professor of Chinese Marine Studies, "The Ming may be very old, but there is plenty of life left in him.

"Only the other day I poked him from behind with a stick and he immediately jumped out of the water and made an impassioned

plea for the adoption of proportional representation."

Ming Campbell is 106.

● Do you think this attack on Ming Campbell is in poor taste? Or do you feel sorry for the dolphins, whose tragic plight is being ignored in the pursuit of a cheap joke? Or you may not care either way. But please send in as many word as you can think of to fill up our pages on www.readitontheblog.telegraph.co.uk

Hitler's Desert Island Discs Found

by Our Classical Music Staff
Hugh Trevor-Ropey (formerley Lord Paul Dacre)

MORE THAN 60 years after Hitler's death, a Soviet archivist has revealed a cardboard box, looted by a Soviet soldier from the Fuehrer's bunker, containing eight 78rpm records in perfect condition.

Incredibly, it seemed, the Fuehrer had spent the war years planning which records he would select when, after conquering Britain, he would order Mr Roy Plumley to invite him to appear on his celebrated Desert Island Discs programme.

Deutsche Gramophon Uber Alles

Surprisingly, Hitler included only one record by his beloved Wagner among the eight he woud take to the imaginary island.

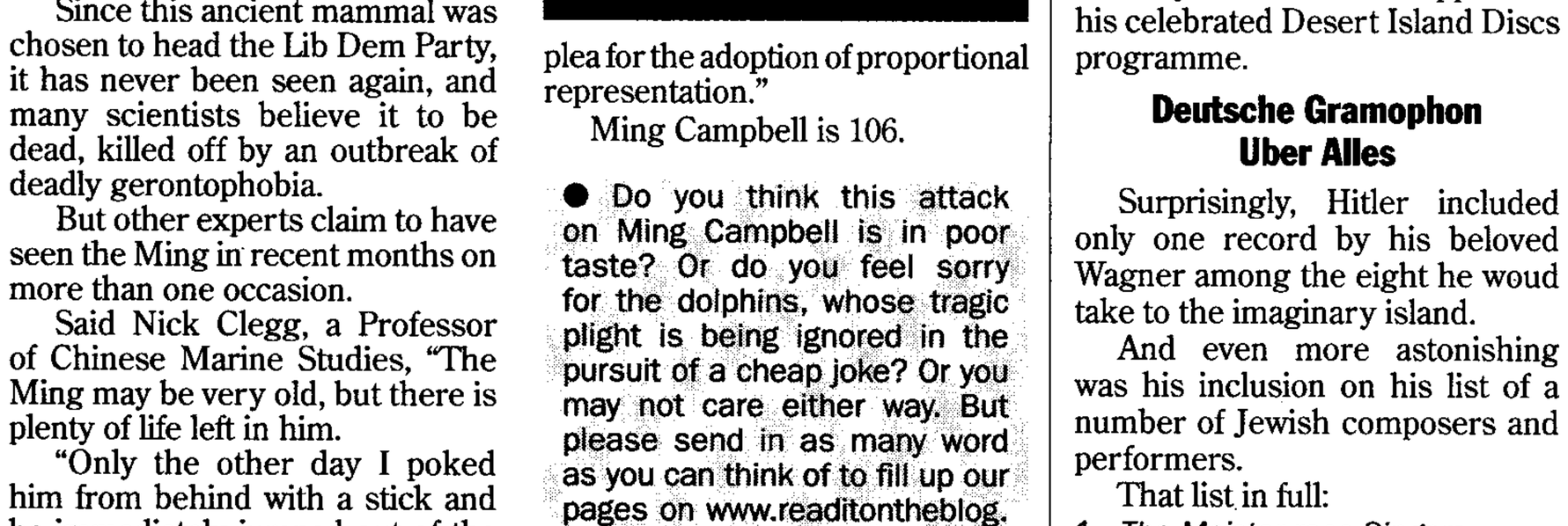
And even more astonishing was his inclusion on his list of a number of Jewish composers and performers.

That list in full:

1. *The Meister-race Singers* (Wagner)
2. *Fiddler On The Roof* (Yehudi Menuhin's greatest Hits)
3. *Theme tune from Genevieve* (played by Larry Adler on the harmonica)
4. *Main title from The Benny Goodman Story* (featuring Benny Goodman)
5. *The George Gershwin Songbook* (Sammy Davis Jnr.)
6. *Barbra Streisand Live At Carnegie Hall*
7. *Elgar's Pomp and Circumcised No. 4* from The Last Night of the Pogroms
8. *Hitler On The Roof Medley* including *"If I Were a Reich Man"* by Topol

Also in the cardboard box was Hitler's luxury, a lox bagel with cream cheese (but not too much gherkin) and his favourite book The Autobiography of Groucho Marx.

You can now hear Hitler's Hits by downloading the podcast from www.DerTelegraphFuehrer Favourites.co.uk


the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOF
WITH MORE MONEY INVOLVED IN THE PREMIER LEAGUE THAN EVER BEFORE..
THE PRESSURES ON THE PLAYERS ARE GREATER THAN EVER...
JUST THE SLIGHTEST THING...
CAN MAKE THEM SNAP!
OCH THE NOOOOO!
ROONEY
DUB

LOTTERY WINNER SPEAKS

THE latest National Lottery winner, a Mr Camelot, has said in a statement that even though he's now won the Lottery three times, he claims it won't change his life.

"I'll carry on much as before, making huge profits for shareholders, putting out horrible TV ads, and screwing up my subscription service," said a delighted *(cont. p. 94)*

DIARY

GERMAINE GREER ON THE BEACH

Striding along the all-too sandy beach this putrid bruise of an English summer, I found myself puzzled by the degree of revulsion I felt for the pathetic attempts by the underaged and the undersized to construct an even half-way decent castle, dammit.

For chrissake, haven't these kids – my god, how that word makes my stomach literally churn! – ever heard of the great British architect Frank Louis Wright? Instead of building beautiful and useful sandcastles with clean, pure lines, they seem hell-bent of throwing any amount of sand into a monstrous pile, willy-bloody-nilly, and then patting it down with immense fury, as though taking symbolic revenge on their dogged milksop mothers for forcing them out of their damp and poorly ventilated wombs and into this arid godforsaken universe that we have somehow created for ourselves. And frankly that gets on my goat.

After a couple of minutes which seemed more like thirty hellish days, I could bear it no longer. I went over to two kids (dressed in hideous, hateful, garish shades of pink and green), grabbed a bucket from one of them and a spade from the other and, in a vain attempt to drown out their whines and their wails, told them, out of the sheer goodness of my heart, "You don't want to be doing it like that!"

First, I made the effort of demolishing their own pitiful attempt at what they laughingly called a castle with a generous whack of my spade. The way those spiteful, molly-coddled children looked back at me was frankly outrageous, their sullen, putrid lips buckling and puckering with ingratitude, followed by the inevitable mewling complaints from them that there was now – you guessed it – sand in their eyes!

In minutes, I had erected a new sandcastle that, by doing away with turrets, windows and so forth and simply concentrating on the essential sandiness of the structure emerged as without doubt a genuine work of art, reminiscent of the greatest buildings created by Nicholas Palladio, the renowned French architect. But did those moronic gibbering short-wearing smudge-faced under-10s – with no, I repeat, no knowledge, I might add, of the history of Western art, show me the slightest bit of thanks?

Did they heck! Of course they bloody didn't. They were just too wrapped up in themselves to just this once think of me.

If they'd been Aboriginal children, they would have thanked me profusely for going to the trouble of creating a sustainable domicile in sand and probably offered me some delightful examples of their immortal folk-art in return. But not these hopelessly spoilt dimwit Brit kids. The name of their game was, as per bloody usual, crappy, stupid, rank, brutish manners and a disgraceful lack of consideration for other people.

Up the beach, I came across a tiny outdoor theatre showing a truly terrifying drama called Punch and Judy. Hugely talented dwarf actors highly versed in the Noh drama of India somehow managed to convey, with a beautifully circumscribed range of expressions and gestures, all the grotesque hatred and suffering and shabbiness that informs our 21st century world. For me, it was a shattering experience, with performances of an unbelievable intensity that put what is laughingly called our National Theatre to shame.

I insisted on going backstage afterwards and found all the main actors – Punch, Judy, the Policeman, the Baby – in a state of nervous collapse. And who can blame them? It was as though the four of them been made visibly thinner by what they had been through, unable to move or even to speak after undergoing such a momentous journey into the heart of darkness.

See it.

Further along the beach I found, to my absolute horror, rides being offered on donkeys. Could someone please tell me just how ignorant can people be? Don't these guys realise that a donkey is not some kind of mule but closer to a fish or an amphibian, who should be permitted to go back into the sea to its home underwater for at least half the day?

After I had expressed my outrage to the pain-in-the-ass who ran the joint and who frankly deserves stringing up, I was just going about my own business with my scissors – cutting the strings of those kites I found aesthetically revolting and personally offensive – when I overheard a little girl with a putty nose and a mirthless smile begging her mother for what she called – and I quote – a "ride on the GG."

Even an ill-educated moron could have told who she meant by GG. Those initials again! Can you believe it? Why is it always me?

And no, in case you're wondering, I wasn't prepared to let this sort of depraved insult go quietly. So I went up to that poisonous little girl with her squashed face and mucus-stained nose and her toddler fangs and her asinine dolly and I said to her, "I haven't worked and sweated and slaved all my life for the cause of all women everywhere regardless of race only to have an annoying little self-satisfied nerve-shredding midget like you try to grab a ride on my back!"

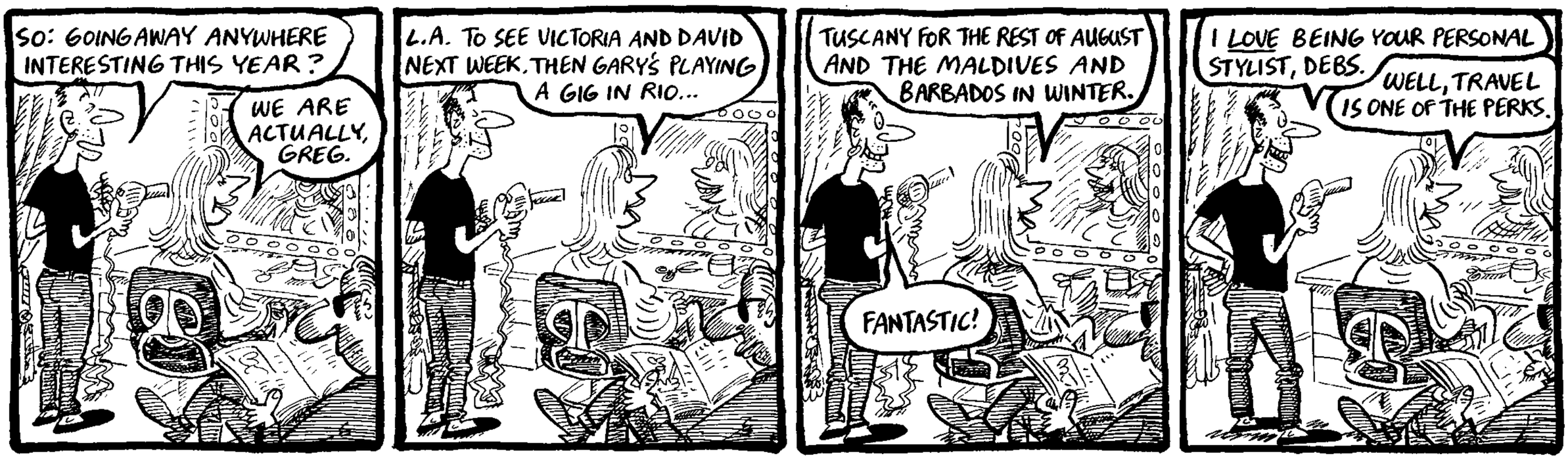
Some people will inevitably argue that I under-reacted, that I should have shown real anger, and that by being so polite and gentle I was playing into her crabby little hands. But you know what I say to those armchair critics of me, stationed in their hundreds of millions, all over the world? You're all motivated by ill-concealed malice against me, and as far as I'm concerned you can go jump in the bloody lake.

I ended my horrific summer beach experience by being forced to queue – goddammit! – at a lorry for an ice-cream. When I finally managed to reach the front – and why, could someone please tell me, should middle-aged women be obliged to use their elbows and toe-caps just to gain their rightful place at the front? – the disgusting and inconsiderate vendor presented me with what he called – of all things! – a '99'. It turned out to be an erect chocolate penis violently and despotically embedded in a vanilla vagina. And that says all you need to know about the British seaside in summer: unbearable, nightmarish sexual agony and torment parcelled up in a wafer cone and sold to the highest bidder for £1.25.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


SO: GOING AWAY ANYWHERE INTERESTING THIS YEAR?
WE ARE ACTUALLY, GREG.
L.A. TO SEE VICTORIA AND DAVID NEXT WEEK. THEN GARY'S PLAYING A GIG IN RIO...
TUSCANY FOR THE REST OF AUGUST AND THE MALDIVES AND BARBADOS IN WINTER.
FANTASTIC!
I LOVE BEING YOUR PERSONAL STYLIST, DEBS.
WELL, TRAVEL IS ONE OF THE PERKS.

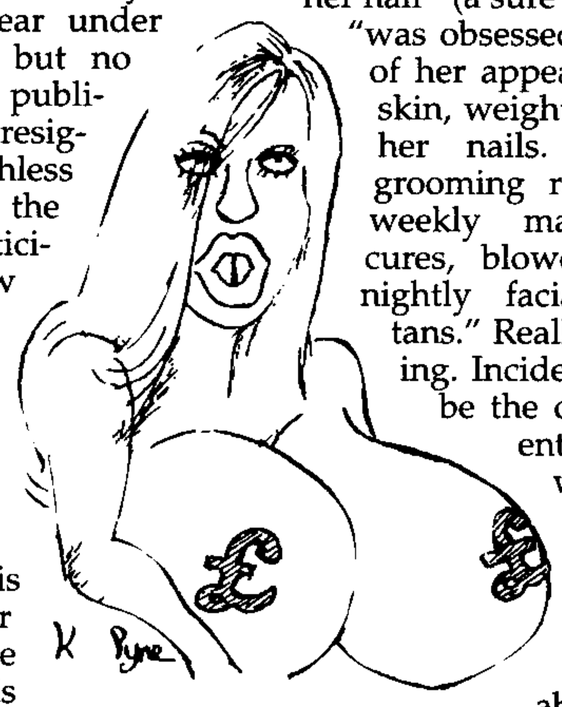
Literary Review

The book what I didn't write

Crystal
Katie Price
(Century, £9.99)

BRANDING: that's what it's about now. A few years ago, when Naomi Campbell's pisspoor novel turned out not to have been written by her after all – darling, who has the time? – there was an outcry and much mocking laughter, and the N Campbell literary career came to an instant, shuddering halt.

But things have moved on (ie got worse). *Crystal* is actually the *second* novel to appear under Jordan's real name, but no outcry has greeted its publication, merely grim resignation and mirthless laughter, and from the book trade, gleeful anticipation, as they know that tens of thousands of morons will snap it up without a thought.



It doesn't matter that Jordan didn't write it; all that matters is that it is branded with her imprimatur. On the beaches of Europe this summer, possession of *Crystal* could well be said to operate as a formal badge of idiocy. It's actually quite hard to open its pages without feeling your lips go slack and the drool begin to form.

Crystal, of course, is beautiful, talented and ambitious. All her life she has wanted to be a singer, and now she and her band Lost Angels are auditioning for the TV reality show *Band Ambition*. All she wants from any of this is fame, money, a large house in Surrey and a washed-up pop star boyfriend with suspiciously groomed eyebrows. So far things haven't gone their way.

"Belle was almost ready to give up... but Crystal and Tahlia stayed strong, keeping the dream alive." Crystal and Belle don't really get on – Belle is small and blonde, which obviously rankles, and has "parents wealthy enough to support her", which makes her "a spoilt princess who always likes to have her own way". But the group stays together because "none of them, least of all Crystal, wanted to abandon their dream."

After a while you begin to suspect that there is a contractual obligation to include the word "dream" on every page. Other favoured words include "successful", "tanned", "boyishly good-looking", "champagne" and "just hearing his sexy voice weakened her resolve".

But who actually writes all this? It seems churlish not to have mentioned her name until now, but in truth "Rebecca Farnworth" itself sounds like another daft pseudonym. Maybe there is a whole roomful of writers operating under this name, and it's a fair bet they are not getting paid anywhere near as well for their work as the boss is. And like all employees, they make their displeasure felt in the subtlest of ways.

At their audition Crystal and the girls "looked good, relaxed and confident, in contrast to many of the other acts who had gone for revealing outfits, and full-on make-up that made them look like hookers". Who could they possibly have been thinking of? Crystal's rival Belle, forever "flicking back her hair" (a sure sign of villainy), "was obsessed with every bit of her appearance: her hair, skin, weight and, of course, her nails. Her personal grooming regime included weekly manicures, pedicures, blowdries and fortnightly facials and spray tans." Really? How appalling. Incidentally, that may be the only time in the entire book that a word beginning with "blow" doesn't end with "job".

But let's not worry too much about the words, because no one else will. All that matters is the name on the cover. These books are selling to people who are otherwise a bit afraid of books, and wouldn't want to read anything by someone they hadn't heard of. In the cinema the theory of the auteur is gradually losing credence, but no one expected the theory of the author in popular fiction to go first. Perhaps a new definition is needed: "famous person who is a bit too busy to do the actual writing". Coming soon: top bestselling novels by Ant and Dec, Simon Cowell, Naim Attallah, Basil Brush...

The Man Booker Longlist 2007

WHAT on earth, you might wonder, has happened to that barnacled national institution, the dear old Booker Prize?

For the last half-decade or so the prize has cranked its publicity machine into gear by way of a long-list of such catch-all capaciousness that literary editors have struggled to fit the two dozen or so selections on to a single page of their newspapers. The expanding suitcase approach had one invaluable advantage; for it meant that practically any novelist of established reputation could be squeezed in on the *ex officio* principle. It didn't matter if, say, Mart or Swifty had written a turkey that year, they were Mart and Swifty, damn it all, and their presence on the roster, amid the deserving unknowns and the hitherto occluded talents, could be guaranteed to keep both the book trade and the arts pages happy.

When, earlier this year, the prize administrators announced that they were pruning the longlist to a more manageable 12 or 13 titles, certain commentators declared that such frugality would work against the interests of fresh young talent. They needn't have worried. This year's judging panel – Howard Davies, Imogen Stubbs, Ruth Scurr, Giles Foden and Wendy Cope – have laboured so hard to defend the interests of the fresh young talent that scarcely anyone the average book-buyer might have heard of remains.

Coverage of the longlist has therefore been mainly about the famous literary heavyweights who had missed the cut – Doris Lessing, Thomas Keneally, Graham Swift and so on, with Ian McEwan the only celeb left standing. As the *Daily Telegraph* reported: "The bookies installed Ian McEwan as 3-1 favourite to win this year's £50,000 Man Booker prize after the judges last night unveiled a 13-title longlist shorn of household names..."

Only several paragraphs later did the paper remember to mention that the longlist also includes A.N. Wilson's new novel, *Winnie & Wolf*. Wislon, himself a *Telegraph* books columnist, has written 20 novels over the past 30 years, along with 16 works of non-fiction. The obscure scribbler is now wondering if he should enroll as a contestant in the next series of Graham Norton's talent show, *When Will I Be Famous?*

So no Jim Crace, no Jonathan Coe, no Jeanette Winterson, no Blake Morrison, no Pat Barker? In their place come such commercially seductive items as Edward Docx's debut *Self Help* and the 850-something densely written pages of Nicola Barker's *Darklands*.

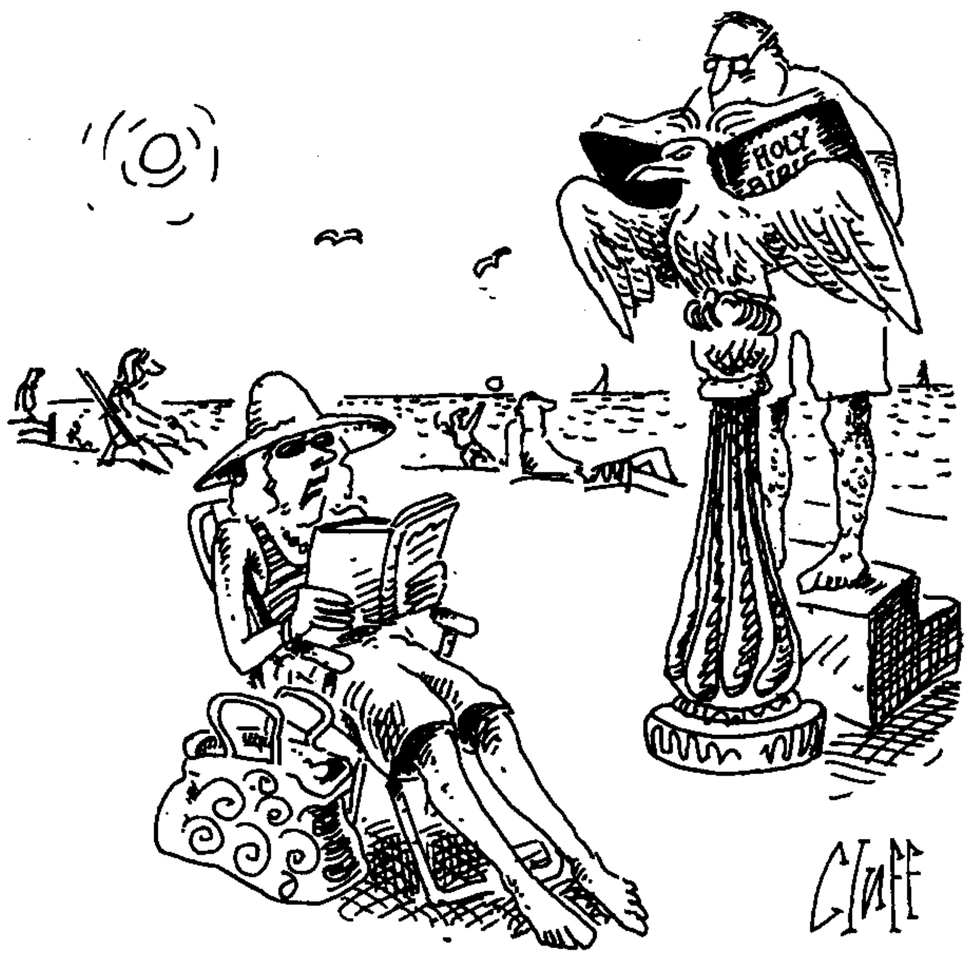
The publishers hit hardest by this iconoclasm were stinking rich Bloomsbury and lofty Faber, both left without a single author in the running.

Bloomsbury had justified hopes of a win for Michael Ondaatje, but few beyond Soho Square will be sorry to see the Harry Potter fat-cats humbled. The absence of a short-listed Faber author for the second year running exposes their weakness (compared to, say, Cape) in developing home-grown writers: their last British Booker winner was Kazuo Ishiguro back in 1989, and they owe their recent successes to Australia's Peter Carey and Australo-American DBC Pierre. Especially galling for them was the presence on the longlist of the aforesaid Nicola Barker, who perhaps felt doubly lonely as a Brit and a woman published by Fab & Fab, who has decamped to Fourth Estate.

Penguin had high hopes for Jonathan Coe, riding high not so long ago with a Samuel Johnson win and a TV adaptation, who gave a benign, laurel-laden veteran's puff quote for the jacket of a novel by unknown first-timer Catherine O'Flynn ("a great debut novel from an awesomely talented author"), published by shoestring indy Tindal Street Press. Coe later found that she was in, and he was out.

From one angle this is doubtless a Jolly Good Thing. If the judges seriously believe that Catherine O'Flynn's novel *What Was Lost*, published by the highly deserving Tindal Street Press, has the edge over the Nobel Prize-winning J.M. Coetzee's forthcoming *Diary of a Bad Year*, then hats off to them for having the guts to say so. On the other hand, from the marketing angle, all this is suicide, for book trade supremos bidden to support the prize like to have famous names to promote. All this may explain jury chairman Howard Davies' claim, widely quoted in last week's press coverage, that all the chosen books will "appeal to a wide readership".

Now, this is very odd. It is not – or it never used to be – the job of Booker judges to select novels that would appeal to a wide readership. It is their job to select the best novels issued in a particular publishing season and damn the commercial consequences. Clearly some highly-placed Booker apparatchik had warned Mr Davies that his first task, having assembled this array of the promising and the quirky, was to

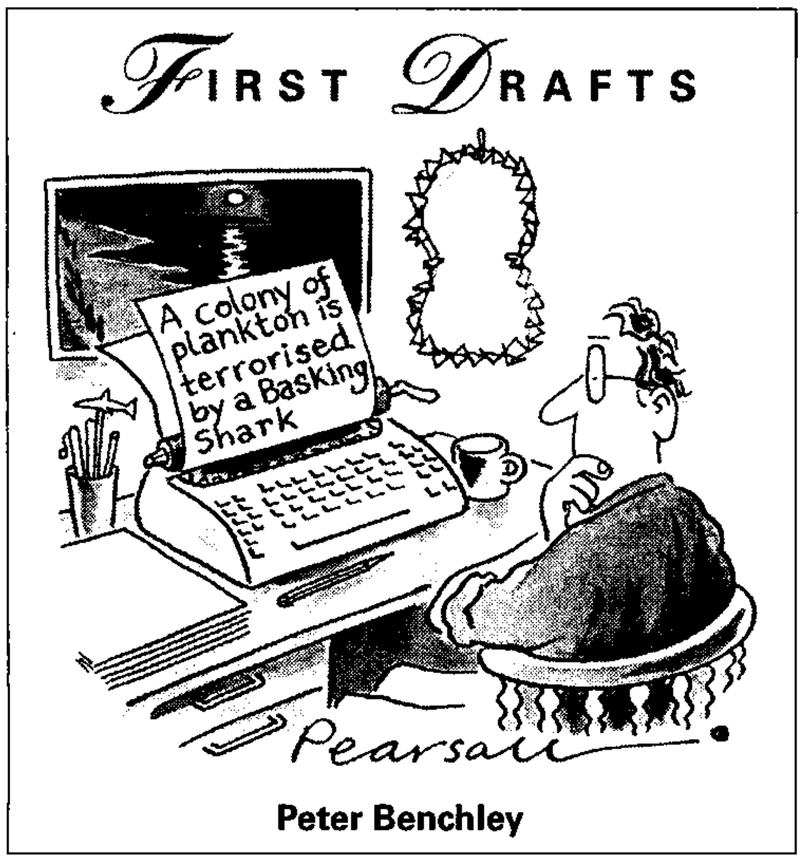


"Well, it's not on any of the summer reading lists I've seen"

reassure big booksellers. Behind this nervousness lies an even murkier agenda. For some years now, adrift in an increasingly scary world of Three-for-Two promotions and mass-market candy, the Booker administrators have been worrying about the prize's diminishing commercial clout.

Hence Mr Davies's reassurances about readability. Meanwhile, neither he nor his bosses can have been exactly cheered by the news that another Booker publicity vehicle has recently ground to a halt. Alas, it turns out that *Booker Man*, the long-awaited autobiography of the prize's recently retired senior fixer Martyn Goff, due for release at about the time of the shortlist and guaranteed acres of newspaper space, isn't finished yet and won't be out until next year. How the trustees must be wishing that Goff, with his hotline to every gossip column in Fleet Street, were here to help them now!

As for the eventual winner, everyone connected with the prize is fervently praying that McEwan's slim novella coasts home. But victory for him – very possibly in a unique double with the Bad Sex Prize – would not necessarily be such good news because (a) second wins are boring, and (b) McEwan himself calls *On Chesil Beach* (163pp) a "novella" but the rules require a "full-length novel", a "substantial" work. But who knows? Having cocked an initial snook at the retail chains with their low-key long-list, the judges may now surprise everybody by choosing not the most popular or accessible or readable book, but the one they think is the best.



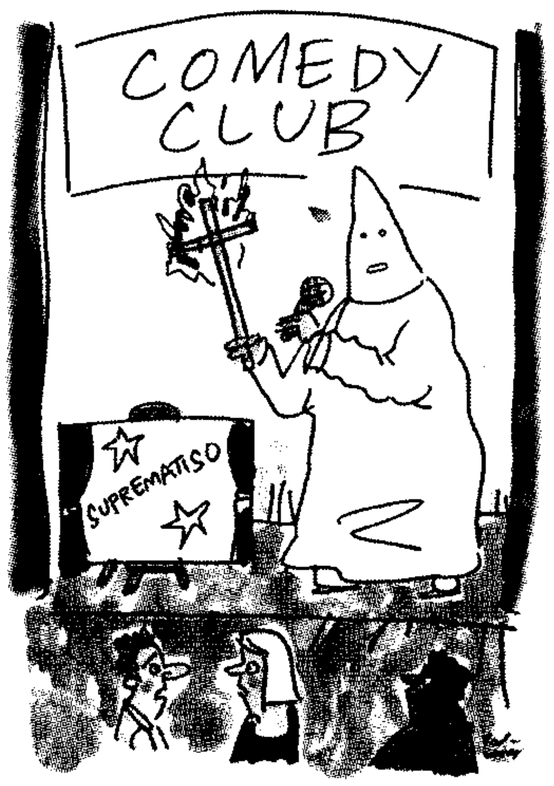
Peter Benchley

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ *ARETÉ*, Craig Raine's "arts triquarterly", does include fiction, poetry and essays. But it's also a vehicle for the poet and academic to pursue feuds – against rival Oxford English dons (squibs in the latest issue snipe at Peter Conrad and Tom Paulin), or bards who have joined Faber since he resigned as poetry editor there in 1991.

In issue 22 of Areté – adding an "s" to the title on the jacket is always tempting – his lieutenant, the All Souls fellow and faux-Kundera novelist Adam Thirlwell, is assigned to bash Faber's latest award-winning star, Daljit Nagra; while Raine himself continues a long-running vendetta (he once called his foe "a bald, ugly, graceless, unaccountably overrated, technically clunky, Muldoon-derivative") with Don Paterson, the most successful signing of his Faber successor, Christopher Reid.

Surprisingly, Raine attacks Paterson for embarrassing writing about sex, not the ideal terrain for a poet whose elegy for Kitty Mrosovsky, "A la Recherche du Temps Perdu", was ridiculed as posh porn salivating tastelessly about his former lover's breasts ("melons"), pubic hair ("dark, smoking"), knickers, vagina and anus. At least the introduction to his Areté hatchet-job provides some handy context, listing Paterson's prizes – Forward, Arvon, Whitbread, Geoffrey Faber, two TS Eliots – since his debut in 1993. Over the same period Raine has only picked up a *Sunday Times* award, and that was a present from his chum Geordie Greig.



"Are you sure all his jokes are 'ironic'?"

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

EIGHTEEN months ago, when the clarinettist Colin Lawson took over as director of the Royal College of Music, it looked an easy job. All he had to do to please his critics was *not* be his predecessor, the unpopular Dame Janet Ritterman.

A regime of happiness and laughter beckoned… but things haven't turned out that way. Amid a stream of resignations by senior staff, Lawson's style has turned out to be rather more laid-back than expected. "If he left tomorrow," said a disgruntled professor, "the only people who'd miss him would be the local restaurant owners."

Famous for his love of socialising and celebrity musicians, his supporters say that he's "a great delegator". This does not, however, convince his detractors. "He pulls in these stars for one-off projects that look good in photos and get written up in magazines," complains the professor, "meanwhile the regular work that's the backbone of College life is disintegrating. Ensembles like the RCM Chorus, the RCM Sinfonietta, the RCM Chamber Choir and the New Perspectives contemporary music group – the basic vehicles through which students learn their craft – have either vanished from College concert rosters or been reduced to a shadow."

Faced with low morale, Lawson has tried to make the College a buzzier, more happening place. His answer? A Costa Coffee cart in the foyer. After general derision and mean-spirited suggestions it was only there to provide him with pick-me-ups after a heavy night out, it was removed after a week – having cost the college several thousand pounds.

FOR cash-strapped colleges that's a lot of money, but not for some of their alumni. Take the late, great Russian cellist Rostropovich, who liked to tell the story of how he left Soviet Russia with his wife Galina Vishnevskaya in 1974 as political refugees, taking only a couple of suitcases, a cello and a dog.

As we now know, it didn't take them long to regain some financial security. Before Slava, as he was affectionately known, died earlier this year, he and his wife decided to auction some unneeded possessions – paintings, porcelain, knick-knacks and the like. Scheduled for sale next month, in 450 lots, Sotheby's expects the hoard to fetch as much as £20m. Given that it sits in the Rostropovich portfolio alongside real estate of astronomical value, it raises the question of how they managed to get so very rich.

They were, of course, two of the leading musicians in the world, and much-loved. They also flourished at a time when it was still possible to make money from recordings. But nonetheless they were *classical* musicians, not rock stars, and Beethoven doesn't rake it in like Bono. So where *did* all this wealth come from? Were dear old Slava and Galina wheeler-dealing prototypes for Messrs Berezovsky and Abramovich? I'd ask for answers on a postcard, but I suspect none would be forthcoming.

"This crowd-surfing's new, isn't it?"

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Gift Vouchers from £5.00
Pamper Experience only £45.00
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GO ON SOIL YOURSELF!!

Advertiser, Lee-on-the-Solent

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we are unable to publish a horoscopes column today.

Newcastle Journal

Fever pitch
Electric atmosphere as fans queued to buy book in central London

BBC News on Potter mania

LUVVIES

I think being famous has become rather common, actually. I don't really respect the sort of people who get to be famous these days. That whole world doesn't seem at all glamorous any more – the films aren't glamorous, the music isn't and the people you see getting out of the private jets aren't. I think there is something rather tragic about it, actually.

RUPERT EVERETT, *Submitted by Maureen Reynier.*

"I have to be involved literally down to splitting the atoms," says the actress about her clothing label, Bitten.

SARAH JESSICA PARKER, *Submitted by Brian Wallace.*

Pseuds Corner

If the measure of Shakespeare's greatness was that he could allow none of his characters to go unredeemed (even the appalling milquetoast Andrew Aguecheek has his moment: 'I was adored once, too') then The Simpsons follows in that great bustling tradition of multum in parvo, the world written in the Erewhon of Springfield.

MICHAEL BYWATER
Independent

The solution was what would later be termed the Carnoustie Swing, now widely recognised as the embryo of modern technique...A generation of Carnoustie golfers in the late 19th century happened upon the innovation by chance, then painstakingly improved it. It was a triumph of inductive reasoning over deductive, of scientific method over pure logic. Like the Enlightenment itself, this powerful new knowledge was destined to spread...

EBEN HARRELL
Time

Grindcore *Napalm Death got me thinking about what happens when language ceases to communicate meaning. Their moral standpoint as artists was also clearly analogous to the primal scream they produced, which leads us to the important realisation that music can contain socio-political messages without resorting to cliché.*

MARK TITCHNER – 'Why I love metal', New Statesman

The GTO makes the aesthetic error of going a little too far in the exploration of advanced styling metaphors, but the SWB is more subtle and more effective because subtlety reaches a more profound part of the psyche than excess. In contrast to the blatant, provocative GTO the SWB is understated and truncated to the point of being almost stunted. There is no coloratura here, but powerful reticence.

STEPHEN BAYLEY on the Ferrari 250GT SWB, Classic and Sports Car

ACQUADULZA bar-wine butega & restaurant Acquadulza is non-place, it is a mental imaginative space fed by primordial sensory stimula. It is an oniric [sic] dimension wrapping ancient timeless languages. In this place past and future meet up and condense into a lake made of present emotions. It is the story of a dream without plot that involves ancestral traditions and metropolitan languages.

Press release advertising one of the 'new amazing projects' by Italian 'architectural hero' SIMONE MICHELI

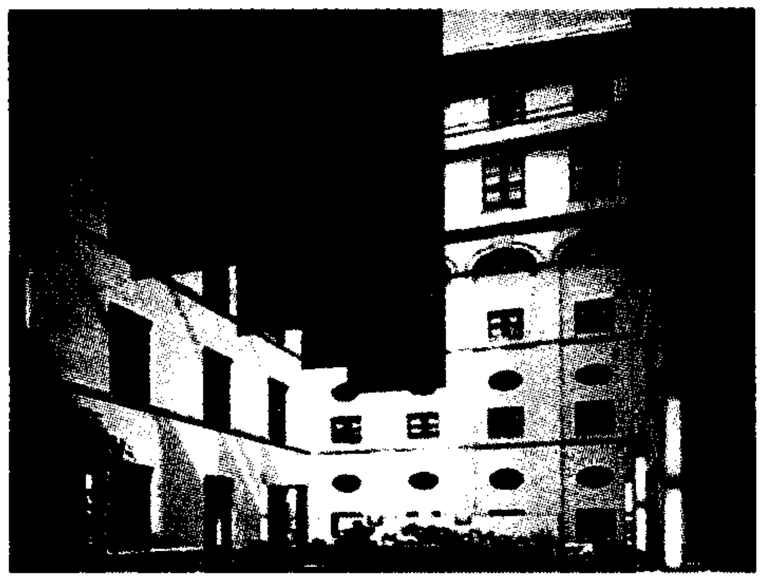
CONTRIBUTORS: Michael Saunders, Nathaniel Kent, Jack Robertson, Lance Davison, Kate Jacobs.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

NAO/PFI

The buried Treasury report



IN THE last 10 years the National Audit Office (NAO) has conducted 600 "value for money" investigations on government projects. It has declined to report its findings on only three occasions; yet all three of those inquiries were into sensitive private finance initiative contracts. A coincidence?

Eye 1187 exposed the damning report on PFI hospitals that was kept secret as the then Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt reviewed the future of PFI hospitals (conclusion: they could go ahead). Now a further Freedom of Information request from the Eye has revealed that a report into the extensive refurbishment of the Treasury's offices in Great George Street in 2000 (pictured) has also been sat on. The NAO refuses to say why; but the following information from the draft report may give a clue:

■ The PFI deal, with a "net present cost" of £169m, was estimated to be only £21m cheaper than the alternative of publicly funding the work. But this was after £26m worth of various "risk" adjustments were added to the publicly funded alternative; and after PFI payments over the 35-year deal were discounted – not just to remove inflation, but by a further 6 percent a year (compounded) under PFI-friendly Treasury guidelines. In other words the public alternative would have been hundreds of millions of pounds cheaper. The total cash cost of the PFI will be a whopping £838m.

■ It would have been even cheaper to simply bring "the building and existing services up-to-date", rather than opt for a complete redesign and fit-out under a PFI deal (including restaurants and landscaped courtyards). This would have cost taxpayers just £50m. By many accounts, including the NAO's, the redesign has produced much improved offices; but would the Treasury have welcomed public scrutiny of the hundreds of millions spent on its own officials if it wasn't absolutely necessary? The report was written in 2004 as Chancellor Brown was announcing swingeing "efficiency" cuts elsewhere in Whitehall.

■ The deal was agreed with PFI company Exchequer Partnerships without any competition. An original Tory deal from 1996 had been shelved following Labour's 1997 election victory. But it was resurrected in 1998 without inviting other bidders, even though Exchequer Partnerships had only bagged the deal two years earlier when their rivals had missed the bid deadline. The NAO was satisfied, however, that "the Treasury took steps to maintain competitive tension in the absence of competition". So that's all right then.

Had the NAO report been revealed to Parliament, it would have provoked sharp debate. MPs would have wanted reassurance that the department that was telling the rest of government to save money was doing so itself and that lavish spending on its own offices was really justified.

It's a fair bet, too, that MPs would have found the NAO report on the Treasury's own spending more important than, say, those on "management of staff sickness absence in the Department of Transport" or "the compensation scheme for Icelandic water trawlermen" that have been revealed. So why didn't the NAO report its findings? It won't say. But it is perhaps worth remembering that the NAO has a vested interest in the success of PFI – and that the Treasury recommends what budget it should have every year.

IRAQ OIL

Shell of a business

WHO is helping put together Iraq's hydrocarbon law which will give western oil interests direct access to the beleaguered country's crude oil reserves?

Step forward Rob Sherwin, the Foreign Office's impartial Middle East energy adviser... and a Shell man to the core.

The *Eye* reported back in November 2005 how Britain was encouraging the Iraqi government to exploit its mineral reserves through "production sharing agreements". While most states in the region have their own national companies to drill the black stuff, these contracts would make Iraq hand over both drilling and a share of profits to western firms.

The agreements now form part of the controversial hydrocarbon law which the US is pressurising Iraq to adopt with urgency. The British FO favours the law too but is making fewer overt threats.

More subtly, after appointing two former BP executives to advise Iraq on oil deals (while working in tandem with a group funded by BP, Shell and other oil companies), the FO hired Sherwin on £70,000 a year to work on "Country Action Plans" and promote the "energy security agenda" in the region.

Sherwin graduated from the University of Birmingham in 1996. According to his CV: "Having completed an 8 week summer student placement with Shell International, upon graduation I joined Shell in London as an international gas business analyst."

By 2001 Sherwin had risen within the ranks, becoming a consultant involved with the firm's Russian business. Specifically, he dealt publicly with the Sakhalin project, another intensely controversial production sharing agreement which the Russian government said directed too much profit into the oil firm.

By 2005 Sherwin had become Shell's business development adviser in the Middle East. Thus it is that one of the FO officials now assisting with Iraq's hydrocarbon law spent his entire previous career at an oil firm where he helped put together production sharing agreements not entirely disadvantageous to his employer.

The Foreign Office confirmed that Sherwin is involved in British responses to the new Iraqi legislation among his wider duties. A spokesman insisted the FO "are clear in our own minds that this is an Iraqi-led process. The Iraqis will make their own decisions on future contracts. We only offer advice if they ask." Yeah, right.

ARMS AND THE MADMEN

A Stinger in the tale

THE fact that British troops are being killed and maimed in Afghanistan by insurgents armed with an arsenal of British-made weapons is scandalous enough. But even more disturbing is the revelation that the UK government turned down the chance to recover the weapons.

At the heart of the scandal is a murky tale of Labour foreign secretaries (Jack Straw: for it is he); code names, Customs informants and shoot-outs that, were it not for the rising death toll in Helmand province, would sit well in a Freddie Forsyth potboiler.

The weapons that are today being fired at the NATO-led forces seeking to destroy the Taliban include missiles that MI6 and the CIA supplied to rebels during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Security officials in London had the opportunity to recover them after the invasion of Afghanistan in March 2002. While the Americans did fund a covert operation to buy back their surface-to-air Stinger missiles, documents seen by the *Eye* reveal that the UK declined to recover any of its British-made Blowpipe missiles (pictured).

Instead, Britain failed to respond to a tip-off from one of the country's most important informants, a man called Andreas Antoniades. He had been an informant for five decades and his work was regarded as of such "vital importance" that Jack Straw when Foreign Secretary personally intervened to secure his release from a foreign prison.

Working mainly for Customs & Excise under the codename "Mario", Antoniades was arrested in June 2001 in Frankfurt on a Greek warrant for drug trafficking offences dating back to the early 1990s. Customs rallied to his defence; and in August petitioned the German courts that a trial would put his life in danger.

Straw, who had been in Germany to agree proposals for establishing an interim government in Afghanistan to replace the soon to be toppled Taliban regime, successfully secured his freedom in March the following year.

Antoniades was certainly well placed to help the British government. His wife is a well-connected Pashtun from Afghanistan and while her husband was in prison she regularly met Foreign Office staff and set up various UK-based businesses to trade once Afghanistan was liberated.

Antoniades had persuaded a London-based accountant to join him in exploiting reconstruction opportunities in Afghanistan. This accountant also happened to be a Customs

informant registered under the pseudonym "George Wise".

A report written by "Wise" says he and his partner were initially approached by three groups in Afghanistan: one working for Afghan intelligence; another for a local businessman; and a third connected to Taliban circles – all offering missiles for cash. However, as a Customs log records, "Wise" told his handler that Antoniades was "extremely frustrated" that British security officials were not interested. Instead, Antoniades met with CIA agents in Kabul.

By the time of the US invasion in 2002, the CIA believed hundreds of its Stingers were still in Afghanistan and it was willing to pay $150,000 for each one recovered. The Stingers all had a unique serial number, which CIA agents verified before handing over the cash. According to "Wise", the CIA was only interested in Stingers: many British Blowpipes and French-made Milan anti-tank missiles were ignored.

Enter Colin Berry, a former British soldier working for Antoniades in Afghanistan, who separately had sent information to Customs in London about these British and French missiles that were going begging. From the British authorities, response came there none; and by February 2003, the opportunity to recover them had been lost. Antoniades was forced to flee after Berry was arrested in Kabul following a shootout in his hotel room that left two locals dead.

Berry later claimed the dead men were trying to demand money for some fake uranium and he killed them in self-defence. He was held in a Kabul jail and was eventually released after six months following another direct intervention by Jack Straw.

Antoniades now lives in Dubai… and the surviving Blowpipes are now being aimed at the soldiers of the country that produced them.

BAE SYSTEMS

Utterly Daft?

HOW WISE was it of BAE Systems to appoint former Coca Cola chairman Douglas Daft (pictured) to sit on its new whitewash panel (*"rigorous ethics committee", shurely? Ed*).

As the arms firm faces past allegations of bribery, corruption and spying on its protesters, the new committee, under Lord Woolf, is charged with examining the company's current anti-corruption and ethical business policies.

Daft left Coca Cola with a $36m pay off; and under his chairmanship the drinks giant itself faced numerous allegations of abuses of workers' rights, environmental pollution and racial discrimination.

The most shocking allegations come from members of the Colombian trade union, Sinaltrainal, who complain that workers at a Coca Cola bottling plant in the country were subjected to harassment from, and even assassination by, right-wing paramilitary groups. Coca Cola vigorously denies that it colludes with or benefits from anti-union violence in Colombia.

Under Daft's lead Coca Cola was also forced to let an Indian bottling plant close after locals complained that the soft drinks firm stole their water and polluted their land. The firm also paid out $192m to settle a race discrimination case.

What is most relevant to Daft's forthcoming work for BAE Systems, however, is not just the nature of the charges he faced at Coca Cola but the way he responded to them.

Private Eye spoke to Ray Rogers of Corporate Campaign Inc, the group which leads the anti-Coke campaign in the US. Rogers had personal experience of Daft's ethical style in 2004 when he tried to address the Coca Cola annual general meeting. Daft asked Rogers to stop his speech on Coke's labour abuses, and when he didn't, security stepped in. Shocked Coca Cola shareholders watched aghast as the activist was hit, put in a chokehold and wrestled to the floor by half a dozen security staff. Even Daft, it seems, must have realised this was a PR disaster. His microphone picked up his comment: "Uh, we shouldn't have done that."

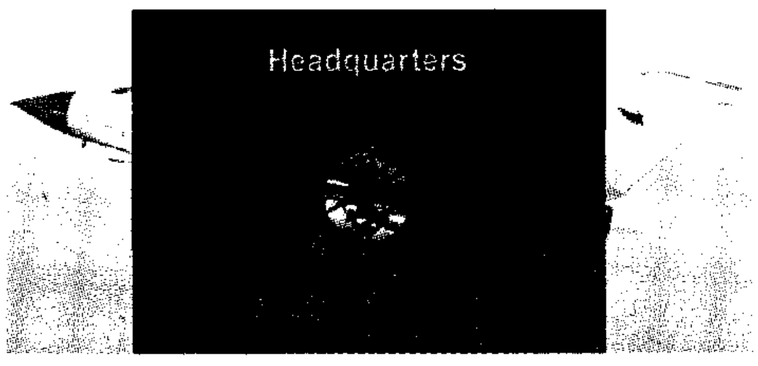
When in 2004 Coca Cola claimed that an independent report had "exonerated" it from the accusations of complicity in attacks on Colombian trade unionists, it refused to release the report. Only under pressure did it admit that it had been prepared by the law firm White & Case – the same firm that was defending Coca Cola in the lawsuit brought against it by supporters of the Colombian trade unionists.

The anti-Coke campaigner Rogers believes Daft was "part of the problem, not part of the solution" at Coca Cola and that he failed to deal with "widespread labour, human rights and environmental abuses". So perhaps his appointment by BAE Systems as an anti-corruption watchdog isn't quite as daft as it seems…

DEFENCE TRAINING

Have they gone MoD?

GORDON BROWN might be pressing ahead with all the big defence kit projects – aircraft carriers, strike fighters, etc – but how will he get people to operate them?



Earlier this year the Ministry of Defence announced a £19bn PFI deal to flog off all its training to a consortium called Metrix, owned by privatised defence research company Qinetiq and property developer Land Securities Trillium, and employing the likes of EDS and Nord Anglia (*Eyes passim*).

Now the MoD is finding it next to impossible to recruit "instructional officers" at its largest RAF training centre in Cosford. The Defence College of Aeronautical Engineering, without whose graduates kit like the £1bn-a-throw strike fighters will be useless, now has 59 unfilled vacancies.

Why so many vacancies? It seems potential applicants aren't attracted by the prospect of working for the above companies, not known for their popularity among the unions, when the work is handed over shortly. A £22,000 maximum starting salary and a planned move to South Wales following privatisation doesn't have the appeal that an MoD job had, especially for people coming out of the services.

Whether this was ever considered in the decision to sell defence training to the highest bidder will never be known. All evaluations of the process remain strictly confidential.

Number crunching

30%

■ Military equipment promised to Iraqi security forces by US which has been provided

■ Military equipment given to Iraqi security forces by US which has gone missing

In the Back continues overleaf ➤

POLICE SPECIAL

Neutered watchdog

SO Met Police commissioner Sir Ian Blair did not mislead the public over the false information given out following the shooting at Stockwell Tube station two years ago of Jean Charles de Menezes, the entirely innocent Brazilian commuter.

According to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), the guilty man was Blair's anti-terror chief Andy Hayman, who kept his boss in the dark. But a close look at the actions of the IPCC after the killing on 22 July 2005 shows that the police watchdog was also guilty of misleading the public.

That night, IPCC chair Nick "Not so" Hardwick put out his first statement giving the impression the IPCC was already independently investigating the tragedy. But we now know from the Blair tapes (those embarrassing recordings the chief secretly made of conversations with people including then Attorney-General Lord Goldsmith) that this was not so.

At 10.50am that morning – minutes after the shooting – the commissioner secretly recorded a conversation with "Not so". Sir Ian says that, with Home Office approval, the IPCC would be kept out of the investigation for the next four days.

Over the weekend, while Hardwick contemplated the limits of his independence, anti-terrorist and Met internal affairs detectives secured the scene of the killing and "Operation Erini" was launched to gather every scrap of paper on events pre- and post- the shooting for the Met's own "corporate memory".

Even when the IPCC thought it finally held the reins of the Menezes inquiry, for more than two months the Met refused to allow access to the Erini files on the grounds of legal professional privilege. When access was finally granted, the IPCC found the Met had been obtaining copies of statements and other evidence taken by the watchdog.

Nevertheless Hardwick, who wants us not to judge IPCC success by its scalps, did not think any of these fundamental humiliations should feature in the £300,000 Stockwell inquiry.

The real unexpressed revelation of the IPCC report is the low regard with which the watchdog is viewed by both the Met and the Home Office – which set it up in 2004 to rebuild public confidence after the Stephen Lawrence affair and other police scandals.

IPCC no evil...

NO SURPRISE perhaps that the IPCC has announced that no officer will face any disciplinary charge over the death of Roger Sylvester, a mentally ill black man who died after being restrained by six officers more than eight years ago (*Eyes passim*).

An inquest jury subsequently decided that 30-year-old Mr Sylvester had been unlawfully killed – held in a restraint position for too long by officers who had used unreasonable force. But the verdict was overturned in the high court in 2004 by Mr Justice Collins, who ruled that the jury had been confused about the coroner's summing up. He said a jury would have had to be sure that the restraint had restricted the amount of oxygen reaching Mr Sylvester's body tissue, and that that in turn had contributed substantially to his death. Much to the family's dismay, the judge declared the evidence to support this as "tenuous".

Because of the sensitivity of the case, the IPCC said three commissioners had considered it. Collectively they decided that no officer should be disciplined. It said, however, that lessons learned from the death "have been a major contribution to making significant improvements within the police service as a whole in relation to increased awareness of restraint and mental health issues..." Which is of little consolation to the Sylvester family.

PC Clod

HOW WILL Inspector McKacker respond to the news that Glasgow plans to stage play events across the city to encourage youngsters to take up traditional street games like marbles, skipping and hopscotch?

The moves follows a Children's Society report highlighting fears about health and development after parents said they kept their children indoors because they were too anxious to let them play in the streets.

In the West Midlands, where parents have allowed their children to play in the streets, community support officers have been swift to demand that the kids remove chalk markings.

In a statement, West Midlands police said they were answering complaints not only about chalk marking on "large parts of the pavement" but of anti-social behaviour. This was disputed by the children, who washed away some of the chalk and vowed to keep on playing.

CUSTODY VISITING

Clause for thought

INDEPENDENT volunteers who visit and check London's police cells have quit after new rules were introduced to stop them talking to the media about any abuses they discover.

More than a dozen of the city's custody visitors have refused to sign an agreement not to draw press attention to individual cases at all and not to talk to the media about more general issues without first discussing the matter with staff at the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA).

Mick Farrant used to chair the Independent Custody Visitors (ICV) panel in Camden, north London, but has refused to sign the new handbook introduced by the MPA and is no longer allowed to serve as a custody visitor. Mr Farrant has spoken out about a number of cases to the *Camden New Journal*, such as that of Enzo Stompanato who died in custody at Holborn police station in 2002. He also talked to the *Guardian* in 2004 about the use of police cells to hold immigration detainees for many hours longer than the 36 permitted – in one case for 117 hours.

Page 25 of the ICV handbook now reads: "Independent custody visitors must not seek to use publicity to draw attention to individual cases or to themselves. Invitations to speak to the press about any aspect of independent custody visiting should be discussed with the MPA. In consultation with the ICV coordinator, the chair may act as the spokesperson to local media in matters concerning the local panel. This can be seen as part of the chair's role in community reassurance. Any other issues must be referred directly to the MPA."

Then, in a section on deaths in custody, it reminds volunteers that: "In the event of the incident becoming high profile the chair should seek guidance from the MPA before giving statements or talking to the media."

So much for "independence".

The volunteers play an important role checking that treatment of people in police custody meets human rights law and policing legislation. Mr Farrant said there was already a shortage of volunteers to carry out unannounced visits to police station custody areas and that before his refusal to sign the new code, he had been spending around 10 hours a week on ICV work. Many of the volunteers who have signed have done so reluctantly and only in order to ensure that detainees are visited.

Rachel Harper, who quit as chair of Tower Hamlets ICV panel, said: "They're really trying to take any control away from the panel", adding that volunteers were also unhappy the MPA was taking over recruitment from the local panels.

Damian Hockney, London Assembly member for Kensington and Chelsea who also sits on the MPA, said the new rules, including the clampdown on talking to media, had caused the "near collapse" of his local ICV panel.

"The media contact clause was sneakily put in after the consultations were complete and represents a real change in the ICV way of doing things." Even though he is a member of the MPA, his attempt to get an explanation for the move were met with the evasive reply that "leading members" of the MPA had decided it.

When the *Eye* asked the MPA to explain the new code, a spokesman said there was no attempt to gag volunteers but that "they're not experts in talking to the media" and they shouldn't be "using their official position to promote an issue that's personal to them".

"All but a tiny proportion have signed," the spokesman added. The *Eye* is aware of many, including the chairs of several panels, who strongly object to the change.

CHARITY NEWS

From Hero to zero

THE final issue of *Positive Nation*, the HIV and sexual health magazine, rolled off the presses last month amid claims of mismanagement by its proprietors, the UK Coalition of People Living with HIV and Aids (UKC).

The charity is going into voluntary liquidation with debts estimated at £300,000, after failed attempts to secure extra funding. As well as the magazine, the charity provided support groups, health schemes and back-to-work projects. In 2006 it won the Guardian Public Service Award.

But angry staff were said to have questioned the wisdom of recent mergers with other HIV charities; the legality of UKC redundancies carried out without consultation; and financial waste on "poorly run and loss-making" fundraising events – such as a glitzy Hero Awards night in 2005 for those working to combat HIV and its stigma.

Chief executive Stephen Bitti resigned last month, admitting to "errors of judgement". One of these, say insiders, was joining forces with Michael Ross, head of the advertising company Cameron Ross Ltd, who promised much and delivered little. Ross had a history that included three county court debt judgments and one insolvent company. Bernard Forbes, UKC's chair, said it was when Ross was abroad on a trip with Bitti that it became clear the magazine's printing contracts were a disaster. When Ross's firm was forced into liquidation in January 2006, UKC was one of its biggest creditors; the bulk of the £100,000 owed was for the failed Hero awards.

When the *Eye* contacted Ross, he sent a fax advising that we "desist" and threatening libel action. This was followed by correspondence from our old friends Russell Jones and Walker. Of the county court judgments, they said Ross had had personal financial difficulties which he regretted but had tried to deal with in a responsible way, by entering agreements to pay rather than going bankrupt. More debt came with the collapse of his first company. Cameron Ross also got into difficulties because a number of clients failed to pay.

Ross disputed UKC's version of fundraising arrangements between the two and said it failed to take his advice to postpone the Hero awards. He claimed UKC owed him as much as he owed it, for advertising and revenue. His lawyers said: "Our client is not facing any other action in respect of this winding-up, in particular he is not facing a director's disqualification." So that' s all right then.

As Robert Fieldhouse, the magazine's treatment editor, commented in its final edition, it is those living with HIV and Aids who have lost the most.

In the City

IT IS an immutable City law, given the lack of real regulation, that you cannot keep a bad man down. And it's hard to find a better example of this law at work than self-proclaimed billionaire (he is poor at maths) Stephen Lumb.

The woeful business history of this London-transplanted South African was detailed four years ago in *Eye* 1073. This followed his arrival with a crew of equally colourful chums at Hanover Capital, talking of gold in West Africa. Hanover, in turn, grabbed control of three equally beached AIM-listed "shell" companies, which were to be vehicles for his illusory deals.

Lumb's Hanover play was short-lived – no surprise given his track record of failed promotions in South Africa. Hanover's advisers departed and dealings were suspended never to return, stranding some 7,000 investors. Lumb then obtained control of Hanover by issuing shares to an American company he controlled.

"You can't be too careful with identity fraud nowadays, Mr Simpkins – you never know who's been going through the bins"

Eventually the failure to file accounts at Hanover and other Lumb companies attracted the sleepy attention of the Department of Timidity & Inaction, which a month ago slapped Lumb with a disqualification order for "unfit conduct", banning him from being a director until July 2010 for Companies Act offences.

Well, better late than never, it might be said. Except that the hyperactive Lumb, 40, is listed as a director of no fewer than 162 companies run out of his offices in Hanover Square, London, or Walton Castle in Clevedon, near Bristol. So just how will the DTI ensure that he is no longer involved in their management as a "shadow" director?

One of the key Lumb companies is St James Resource Management – no accounts since 2005, and those were for 2003! – through which he has been behind Great West Gold, a US version of the Hanover play on the sub-prime Pink Sheets market.

Great West was the lucky recipient in 2004 of the marvellous potential gold and copper mines of Mali, which promised so much when they were being sold to Hanover in return for shares. These golden prospects were quickly abandoned. Instead, Great West in 2004/5 acquired shares in several gold-mining prospects in them thar hills of Arizona and California. These were then in some cases sold on for shares to other companies.

These deals, done for hundreds of millions or billions of Great West shares, often seemed to see Lumb acting for the vendors – companies in Britain, Gibraltar or other offshore venues. In some cases the buyers and sellers were to be found via the St James offices. The plan was to create a "mining house" which was to distribute shares to the lucky Great West and Hanover shareholders. This has still to happen. Great West shares have lingered almost off the Pink Sheets radar at a fraction of a cent.

But in recent months all has seemed unwell inside Great West. Chairman Robert Axtell resigned in December to be replaced by another Lumb associate, solicitor Peter Bezzano. Then, in June, Bezzano was replaced as CEO by Alan Santini, a young friend of Lumb's from his South African days.

Meanwhile there has been no sign of the promised appointment of any auditors (the previous beancounters quit over a year ago) and Great West has not filed any reports with the Securities & Exchange Commission regulator since those for the third quarter of 2005. Sound familiar?

The company has, however, announced a move out of mining and into finance with the acquisition of Unitrust Capital SA Group, effectively a reverse takeover, and a change of name to Fortress Financial Group. Unitrust is said to be based in London but has no listed telephone number. It appears instead to be based in Costa Rica, from whence it is said to offer prepaid credit and debit cards while being dedicated to "financial security, confidentiality and service".

Hopefully, the DTI will not wait another four years to find out what Lumb is up to – and neither will the SEC.

ENCOURAGED perhaps by plans for the refinancing and early repayment of his £348m loan from the Royal Bank of Scotland (through the sale of the group's properties, including the Knightsbridge store, to another Fayed company) the phony pharaoh Mohamed Fayed rewarded himself with a £48.5m dividend payment from Harrods Holdings to the Fayed family partnership in Bermuda. But this included £47.5m already disclosed as paid last year after the sale of the Kurt Geiger shoe business. So it seems there was a £1m extra dividend. The 2006 total dividend was just £5m.

Harrods had a 10 percent better year in sales but upped its dividend from £17m to £55m, which, when it reached the store's ultimate parent (helped by another £5m from Harrods UK), was enough to justify the dividend. Fayed himself appears to have taken a pay-cut from £5m to £2.6m.

In December 2006, several weeks before the financial year-end, Holdings sold its best property assets to Harrods Property, a recently formed company, for £705m. Property is ultimately controlled from Bermuda, Panama and the British Virgin Islands by another Fayed company. Initially Holdings loaned Property the money, but it was quickly repaid all but £303m. Property, it appears, borrowed £348m, which it then paid to Holdings who repaid that money to RBS. Property also took over a £54m debt to RBS for early repayment. Holdings will now pay Property almost £40m a year in rent, which will no doubt help with the loan repayments. The loan from Holdings is interest-free. So in one move the Harrods group becomes almost debt-free for the first time in years. That would mean the store was easier to sell should the pharaoh have such an idea.

But Harrods Property still owes both Holdings and whoever financed the purchase – RBS is trustee for the presumed lenders. Also, the Harrods pension fund has a charge over all the properties to cover the pension deficit. Following the property switch, Holdings agreed a deal with the pension trustees whereby it paid in £3m plus putting £50m in an escrow account until 2008 and an agreement to pay £16m a year for the next seven years. All of which reduced the deficit in the Harrods fund to £17m – making the fund also less of an obstacle to any sale. But then Fayed always denies he wants to sell.

Just how Harrods Property repays that new loan is less than clear. As is why Fayed should decide to repay the RBS loan 14 years early. Or where the money came from for the cash part of the loan.

BORIS BEREZOVSKY has created a major headache for the British government, where Home Office officials would be forgiven for feeling aggrieved that he has repaid their hospitality by enraging the Russians, from whom he was given asylum.

Legal experts believe that Berezovsky cannot be extradited to Russia over his constant attacks on President Putin and boasts of supporting a coup against the Russian government – almost certainly breaches of the usual asylum rules. And he could only be expelled/deported to another country if one was prepared to take him. But there is one possibility: experts say Berezovsky could be refused entry into the UK the next time he flies in from another country, such as Israel, which would also not extradite him to Russia.

He could then be encouraged to return to that country and apply again to enter the UK – an application that could be rejected. Whether the Home Office would be up for that given the former oligarch's financial clout is unlikely. But immigration experts believe it could be done if he keeps on pushing.

STEPHEN FORSYTH, who died last week, was one of the more interesting players on the fringes of the City.

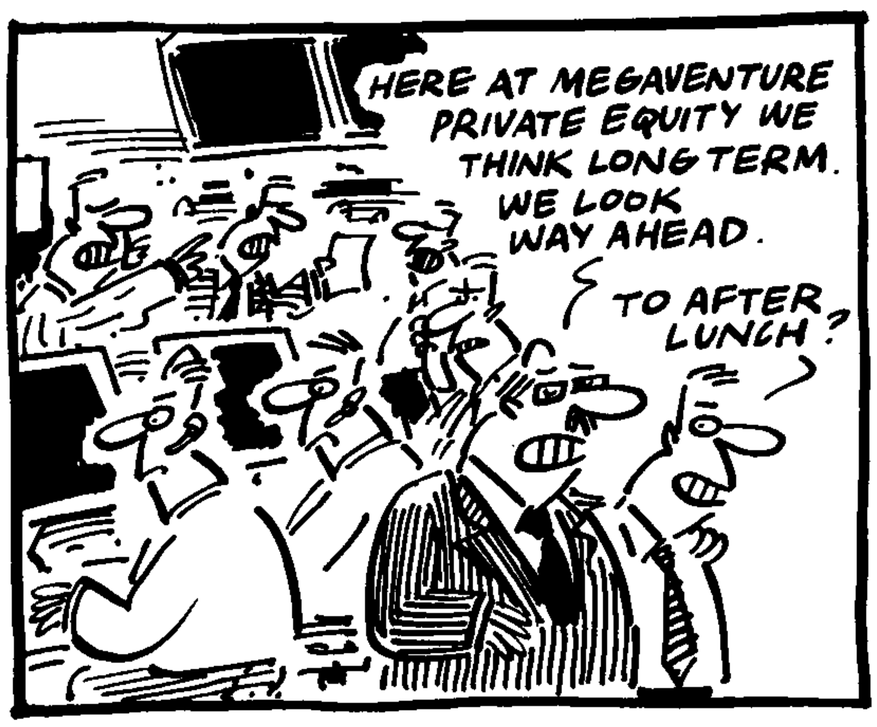
No stranger to controversy or the regulators, who pushed him out of casinos in London and kept him out of sports betting in Las Vegas, Forsyth in turn regulated others who the regulators either missed or ignored, by effectively blowing the whistle on their activities.

This came from being a "go-to" man for many seeking finance not easily available from conventional sources. More recently he had allied himself with the ruling family in Abu Dhabi, and moved there when not in London or at the races. The boom in online gaming enabled Forsyth to get back into a business he knew very well. But the Forsyth financial muscle was also to be found behind a series of colourful but not always successful business ventures, from cotton-based toilet paper from China to seeking compensation from busted Russian oil company bonds. Not a man to take lightly, his involvement on behalf of investors resulted in forcing changes at Savoy Asset Management, headed by former chancellor

☛ *See over...*

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG



Kenneth Clarke. More recently he moved into financing litigation, pulling off a $14m coup in a dispute between hedge fund managers just before he died. He was 57.

PLANET FOOTBALL

Leeds United

THE Football League's decision to reject chairman Ken Bates' plea not to penalise the relegated club with a 15-point handicap at kick-off in League One is no surprise. Bates has few friends or admirers among his football peers.

Similarly, he does not have much success with partners or investors. They recall how the late Matthew Harding, Chelsea's pre-Abramovich saviour, was treated. Efforts by Bates to find a similar saviour at Leeds fell on deaf ears. Which brings us back to who exactly are his offshore benefactors there?

The original Bates backer was the Swiss-based Forward Sport Fund. It, along with the Guernsey-based Astor Investment Holdings, still backed the Bates bid to buy the club out of administration, despite taking a nearly £18m hit. Forward is managed by Chateau Fiduciare SA of Geneva. Last July, a Julie Welsh became a director/manager there. It is believed that this is the same Julie Welsh who was an accountant living in Guernsey, from where Bates used to locate his offshore interests until his pal Patrick Murrin was forced to resign from Harbour Trustees. Murrin too was an investor in Forward. All, no doubt, entirely coincidental, because Bates has insisted – and the Leeds administrators KPMG have accepted as true – that he has no link to Forward or Astor.

'Slicker'

Number Crunching

£3.3bn ■ Amount spent by Norman Lamont attempting to prop up pound on Black Wednesday

£41.65bn ■ Amount spent by European Central Bank attempting to "assure orderly conditions in the euro money markets" last Friday

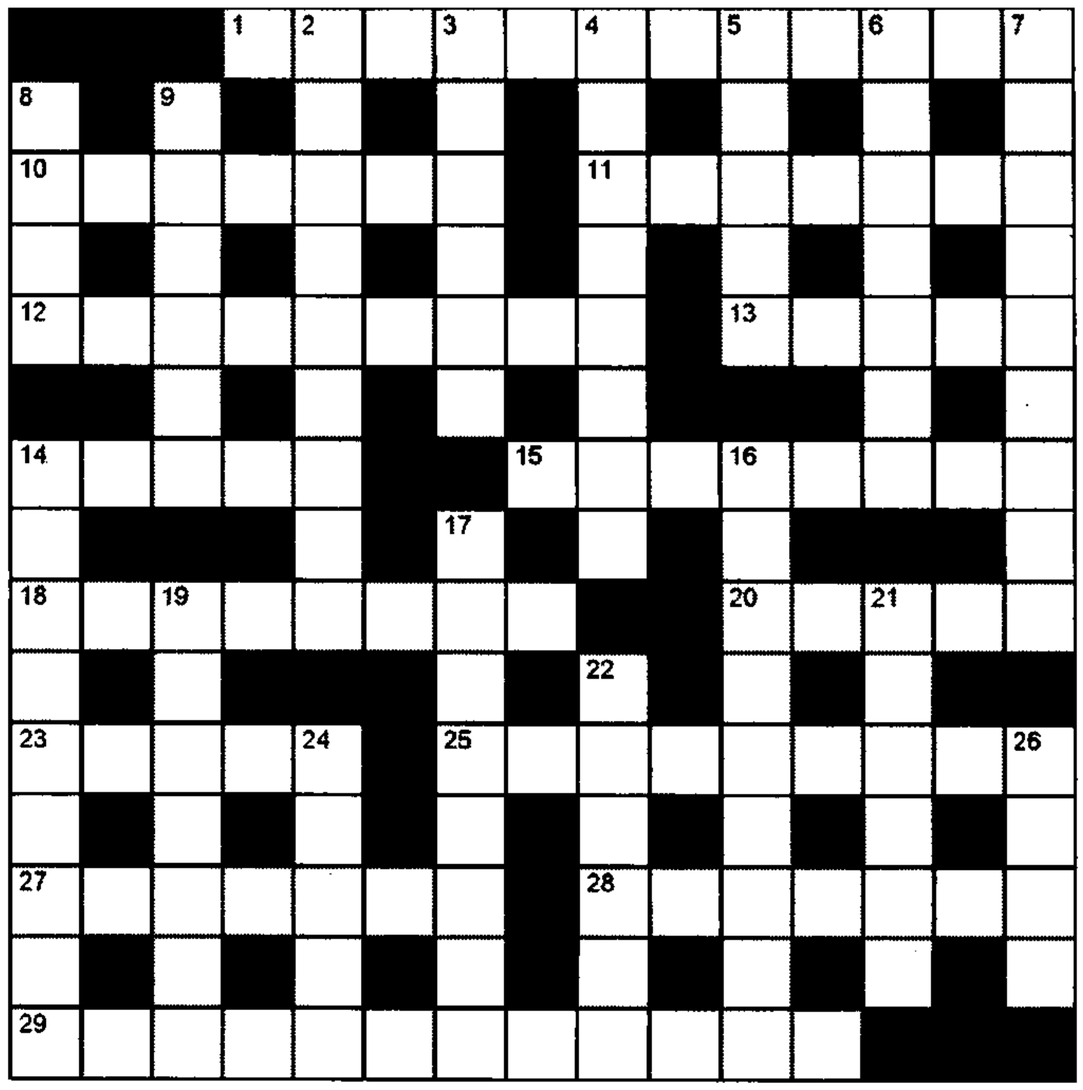
JUST FANCY THAT!

"ONLY the Sainsbury family now stands between the Qatari Prime Minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani, and a successful kill. Sheikh Hamad is, by the way, not to be confused with the overall ruler of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, or indeed the Emir's brother, Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani, who was prime minister until April. Oh never mind. If Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves had come knocking, nobody would have been any the clearer." – *Independent* business editor Jeremy Warner comments on the Qatari interest in Sainsbury's, in his Outlook column, 19 July.

"Some of the concern about the sale of UK plc is based on nothing more than outdated anxiety about the malign motives of Johnny Foreigner. No one bats an eyelid when our friends from across the Atlantic buy up British businesses, but as soon as those shady Oriental types start flashing their cash – or, God forbid, Arab investors arrive with their ill-gotten oil gains – protectionism is back on the agenda. Prejudice of this type has as little place in the debate about Britain's policies on mergers and acquisitions as in any other area of regulation or law-making." – *Independent* deputy business editor David Prosser, writing the Outlook column while Jeremy Warner is on holiday, 26 July.

EYE CROSSWORD 346

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 23 August 2007

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

1/20 Gushing with enthusiasm only to be lumbered with tacky pants? (8,4,5)

10 Piss on dull table-top protector (4,3)

11 The issue of Clinton's revolutionary lecherous sexual exploits/adventures predominantly (7)

12 It makes the situation unbearable, cobblers associated with this minister (4,5)

13 Axe Bush! (5)

14 Increase in sex drive once repressed (5)

15 Like coming from Argos, maybe, with cut down recording aid (8)

18 Loopy thing awfully keen to grab fellow in balls (4,4)

20 See 1across.

23/9 One hardening a man to disappointment (5,6)

25 Kinky daughters: a capital sight when they get changed (3,6)

27 Latin needs energy to shag having imbibed river of port (2,5)

28 Members' Pavilion originally is seen in a different way (7)

29 Short space of time not being the focus of attention for Tracey Temple vis-a-vis Prescott? (3,2,3,4)

DOWN

2 With top off, Donald's getting "wood" – rarely done? (4,5)

3 Bloody channel putting US TV series in "creative" environment (6)

4 Creepy little thing scribbled N.O.R.W.I.C.H. at top of missive (8)

5 Conjecture during Hague's span? (5)

6 No way booze is a remedy (7)

7 Arses raised US money for global chain (9)

8 He was relatively done for but reported fit (4)

9 See 23ac.

14 Where peeler could be seen with belt and truncheon? (5,4)

16 Put off by ridiculously nude Jordan, name dropping (9)

17 Special birthday? Get knotted, stuck in river (8)

19 Drug taken by Stone with the stupid nickname (7)

21 Part of e.g. theatre seat dislodging maiden's bust (6)

22 One extreme of Murdoch press's filthy disease ('e's replacing Sun) (6)

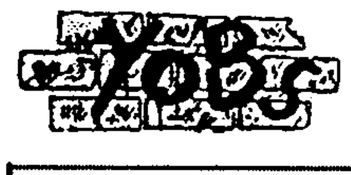
24 Line from familiar ex-Sun editor for Maxwell? (5)

26 Mediocre bastard – and lost (2-2)

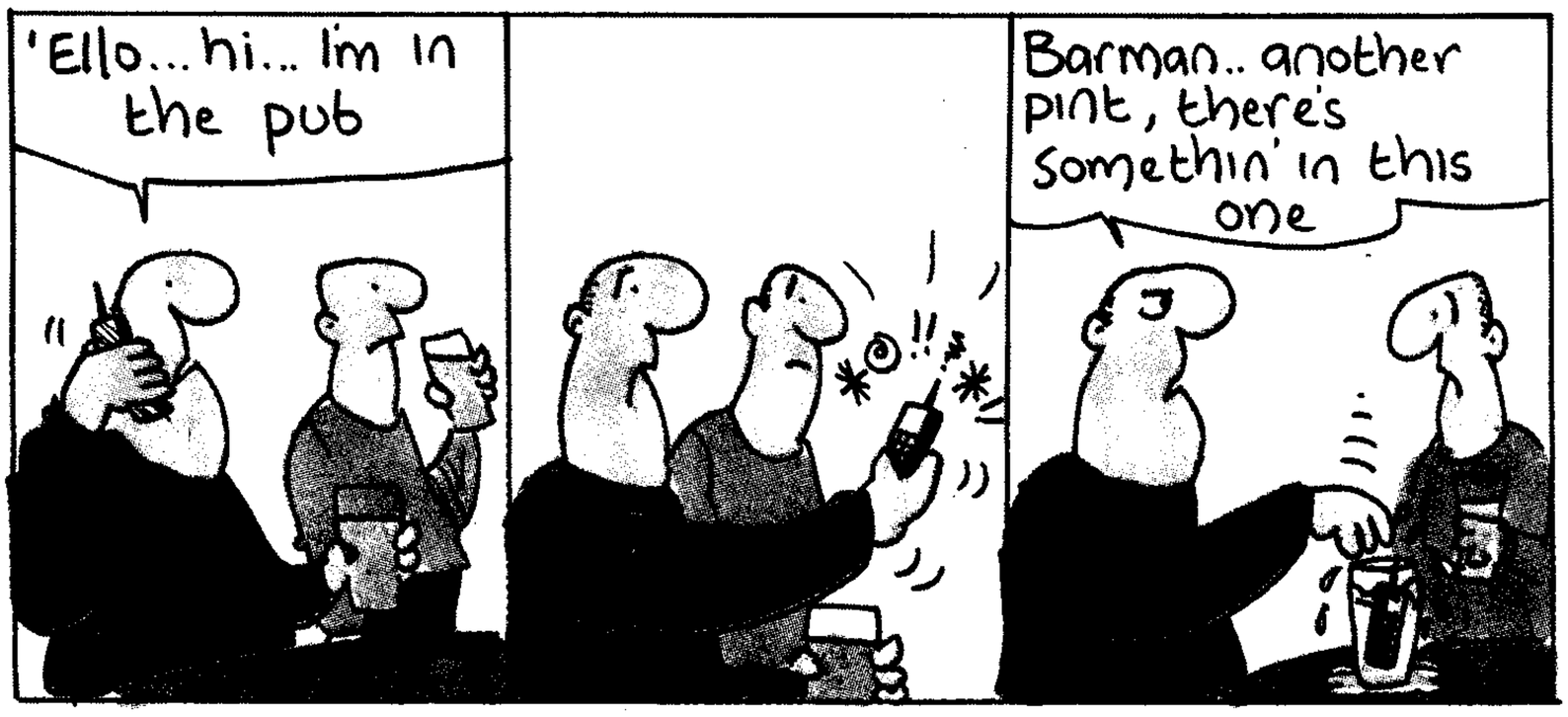
Crossword 345 winner: R.T. Mills

ACROSS: 7 Japan 8 Ruptured 9/12/27 Scottish National Party 10 Nozzle 11 Semen 14 Trivial 16 Academy 19 Two-timer 21 Vicar 23 Carter 25 Throttle 26 Scorcher.

DOWN: 1 Sputum 2 Insignia 3 Urchins 4 Spinet 5 Buzz word 6 Heel 7 Jack Straw 13/24 Admiralty Arch 15 Vote Tory 17 Cover-ups 18 Urethra 20 Marshy 22 Caters.



HUSBAND



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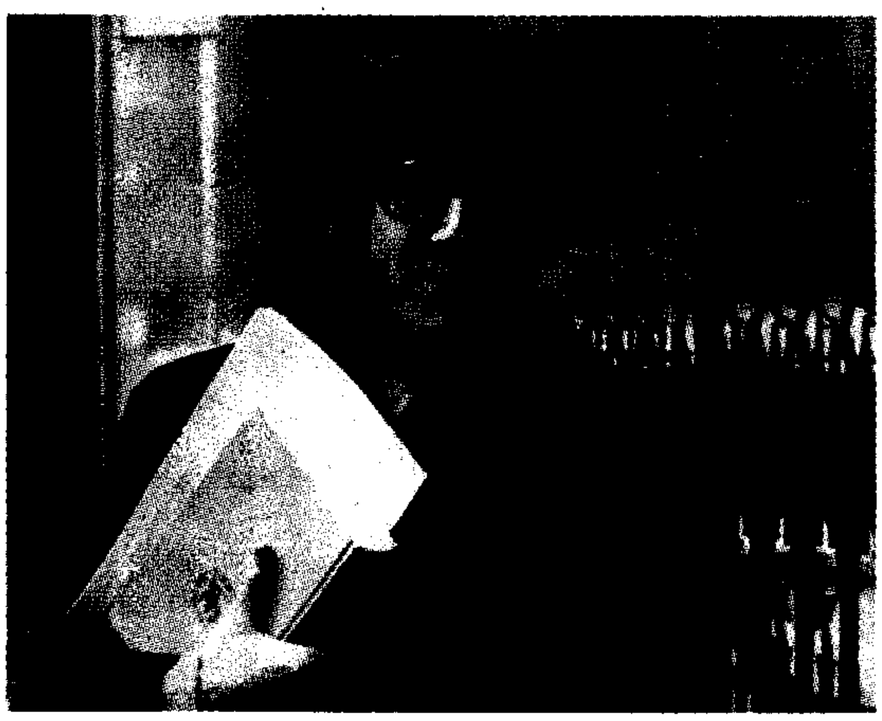
THE PAUL FOOT AWARD 2007



For the third year running ***Private Eye*** and ***The Guardian*** are awarding a prize for investigative/campaigning journalism in memory of Paul Foot.

There will be an overall prize of £5000 and five runners up will also be awarded £1000 at a ceremony to be held in London, in October.

Submissions will be accepted for material published in a newspaper, magazine or on a website between 1st September 2006 and 31st August 2007.

"The most coveted pure journalism award the trade has to offer. No hidden agendas, no vested interests except the excellence of the journalism as illustrated by last year's long list which included everything from fine campaigning journalism to great local paper reporting and street magazines"
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							Total	

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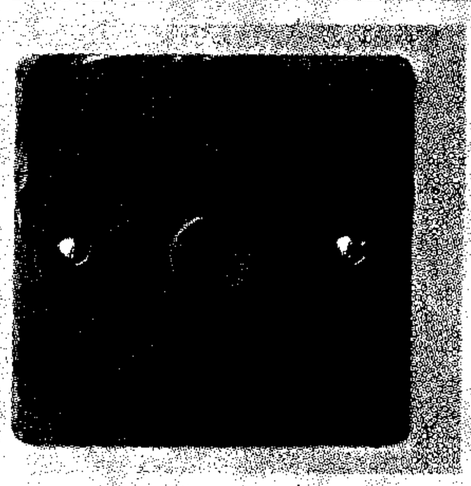

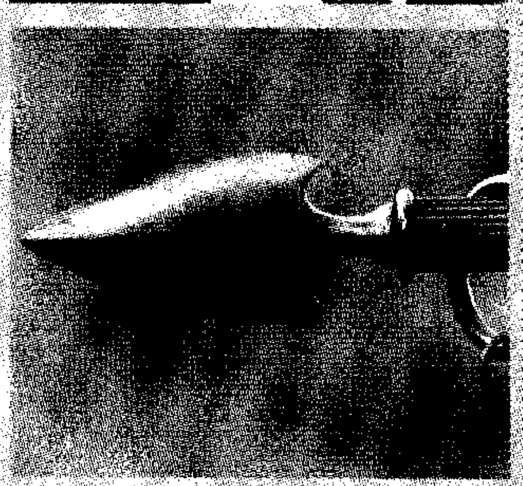
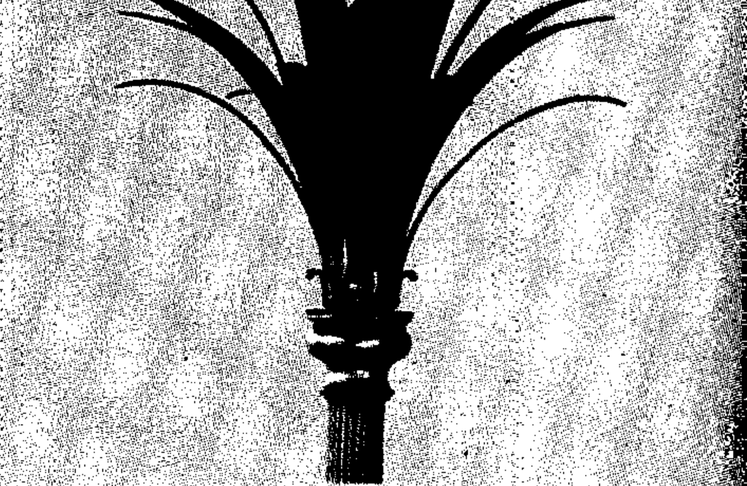

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NAIVE ENGLISH GRANDMOTHER in USA prison needs £2000. Help to return home please S/C: 11-05-57. A/C: 00463976.

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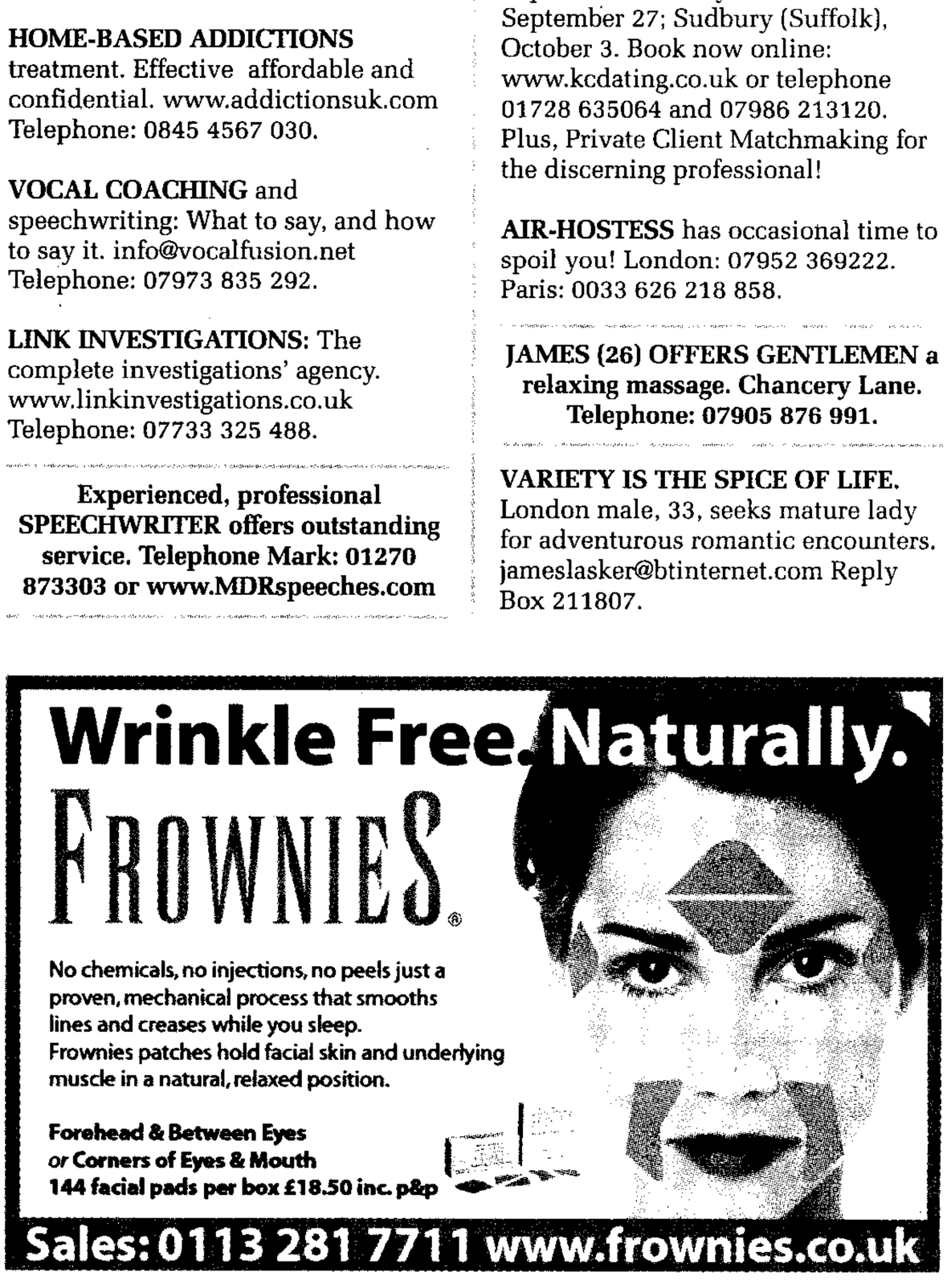
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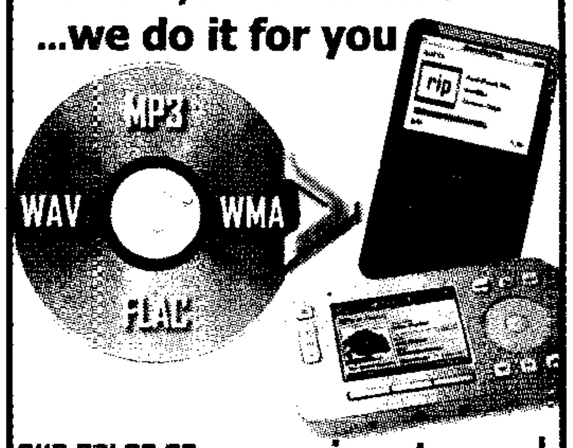

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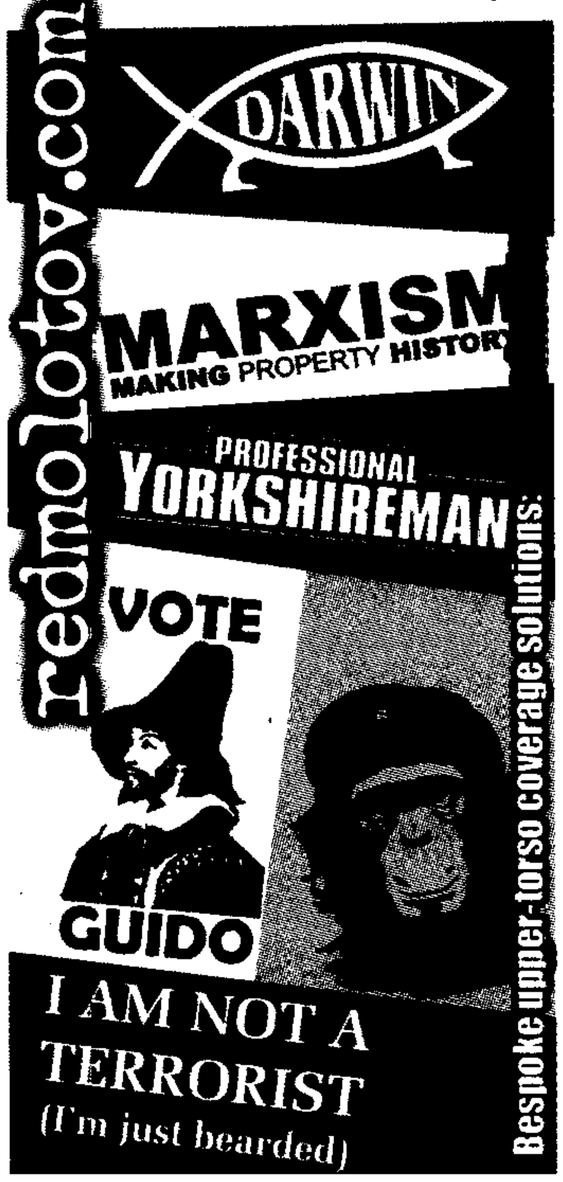

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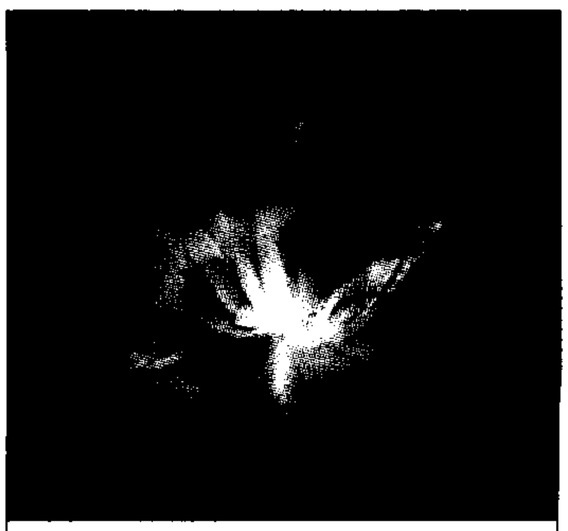

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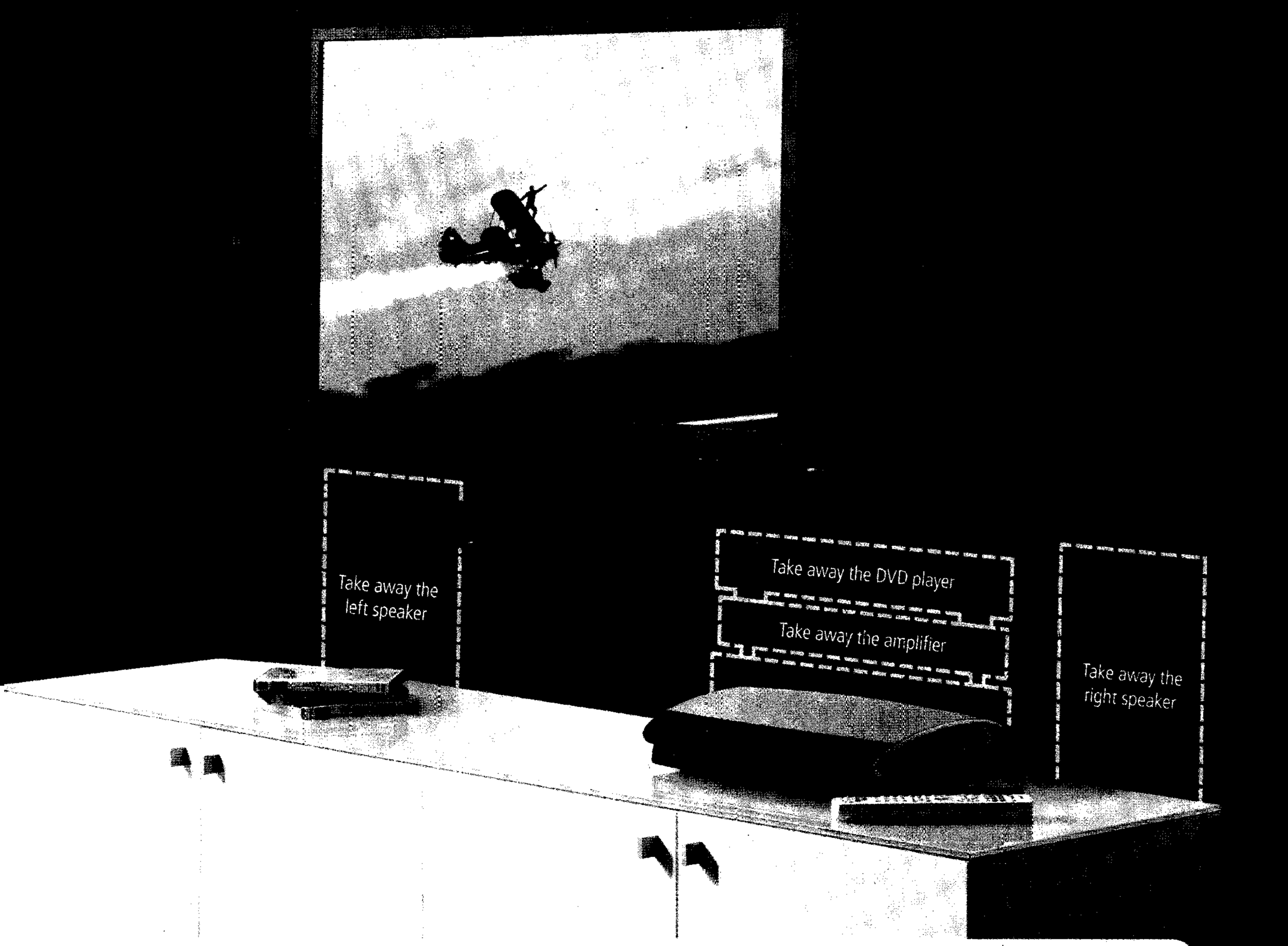

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funded by the DfES.

Sky is a CarbonNeutral company